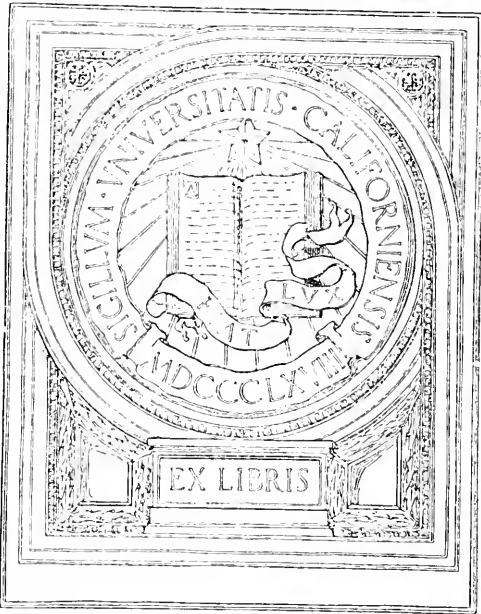
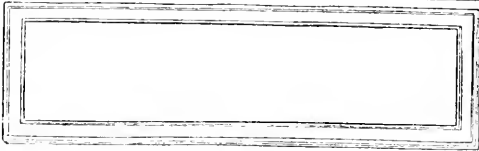




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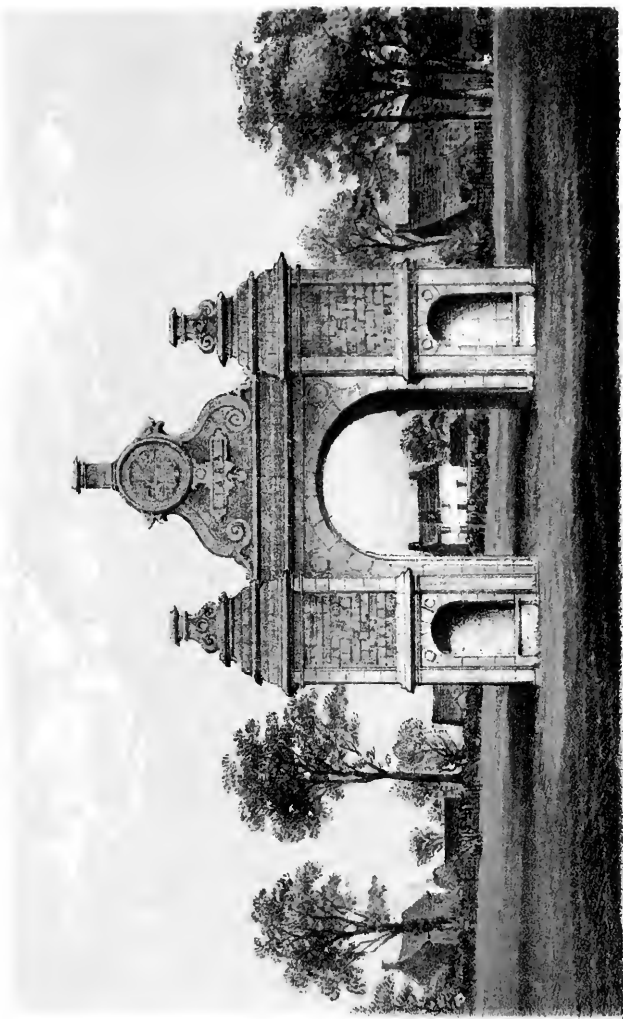
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ONE OF THE GATEWAYS AT HOLMEY, 1830

HOLMBY HOUSE

A TALE OF OLD NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

BY

G. J. WHYTE MELVILLE

AUTHOR OF 'DIGBY GRAND' 'THE INTERPRETER' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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ETC. ETC.

HOLMBY RECTORY.

DEAR SIR,

IN dedicating to you the following Tale of Old Northamptonshire, permit me to offer you my hearty thanks for the assistance I have derived in its details from your local knowledge and archæological research.

I can only wish I had been better able to take advantage of those resources to which you have so kindly given me access; but I may still hope that, however far I have fallen short of the mark I aimed at, with *you* at least a story will find favour, of which the scene is laid in your own immediate neighbourhood, and the time of action chosen full two hundred years ago.

Believe me to remain,

Dear Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

G. J. WHYTE MELVILLE.

BOUGHTON, *February*, 1860.

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HOLMBY HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD OAK TREE.

THE Pytchley hounds have had a run. Io triumphe! The Pytchley hounds have killed their fox. Once again, Io triumphe! Not that these are unusual events with that well-ordered and efficient pack, nor that the establishment is more than commonly exhilarated by success; but that such runs as this last do not occur oftener than two or three times in the season, and deserve to be recorded accordingly.

It is a curious mania, that fondness for hunting which pervades the rural population of Great Britain, from the peer to the peasant, and which we alone of all their progeny seem to have inherited from our Scandinavian ancestors—a mania that outlives love, friendship, literature, money-making, all the devices of poor human nature to squander its most priceless possession—Time; and which seems to flourish only the more vigorously when the health and bodily strength indispensable to its enjoyment have passed away for evermore. We, too, in our ‘hot youth,’ were once inoculated with the malady, and its seeds

have never since been thoroughly eradicated from our constitution. There *was* a time when our heart used to beat thick and fast at the first whimper of a hound ; when the colour mounted to our cheek, and our eye glistened brighter, as we watched the gorse shaking above the busy pack ; when the life-blood coursed quicker through our veins as we listened for the distant ‘View-holloa’ proclaiming him ‘*away!*’ and the mad equestrian revel really about to commence. Then it was ecstasy to be borne along at speed by a gallant generous horse, himself giving and receiving the mutual pleasure enhanced by so confiding a partnership ; to thread with calm dexterity the rushing cavalcade, and reach, unbalked by restive steed or undecided rider, the spot we had marked out many a stride back for our own. Large, black, and formidable, hand, seat, and eye combined to land us safely on the further side ; and *then*, with tightened rein, head up and hands down, to speed away after the streaming pack, good friends and true to right and left, but not a soul between ourselves and the hounds !

Alas, alas ! ‘*post equitem sedet atra cura,*’ she can cling even to the sportsman’s scarlet, she can keep her seat even over a Northamptonshire ox-fence ; but though the good horse carry double, he feels not the extra load, and the rider’s heart must indeed be heavy if it can ache at moments such as these.

As the penitent highwayman remarked to the chaplain at the gallows-foot, ‘Oh, I repent unfeignedly of my sins, but yet—a gallop across a common ! *you dog, it was delicious!*’

So now, though the days of our pilgrimage are in

the 'sere and yellow leaf;' though boots and breeches have given way to flannel bandages and fleecy hosiery, whilst gout and rheumatism warn us that wet days and 'wet nights' are equally dangerous to our *physique*; though our quiet cob, once the property of a Low Church bishop, is getting too much for us, and is coveted inwardly by our eldest grandson, who already considers his own Shetland pony 'hardly up to his weight,' we have still a hankering after the golden joys of our youth, still a sneaking kindness for the tops and the scarlet, the crack of the whip, the echo in the woodland, and all the appliances and accessories of the chase.

'What a hunting day!' we remarked aloud to our walking-stick, as we climbed the hill painfully towards Holmby, and stopped to admire for the hundredth time the wide expanse of beauty and verdure stretching far away beneath our feet for many a mile to east and west, dotted here and there with noble standard trees, and shut in by the dark stately woods of Althorpe that crown the rising ground to the south. 'What a hunting day!' a sky of dappled grey, a balmy breeze just wooing into existence the hundred buds and beauties of early spring—a day to have gathered the first peeping violet 'long, long ago.' *Eheu fugaces!* what's a violet, with no one to give it to?—day of beauty and promise, a day such as George Herbert so charmingly describes :

Sweet day, so cool and calm and bright,
 Sweet bridal of the earth and sky;
 Sweet dews shall weep thy fall to-night,
 For thou must die.

But nevertheless, rather too muggy a day for an elderly gentleman nearly fifteen stone weight to walk up such a hill as that ; so we rested on our stick, mopped our heated brows, and leaned our back against the stem of a fine old oak that stands within a stone's throw of the wall surrounding all that is now left of the ancient palace of Holmby. We own to the practice of day-dreaming—' mooning,' it is called by the irreverent—and we were soon lost in the long vistas of the past, threading the labyrinth by help of that delusive skein which we are pleased to term history, taking up one end at the period at which we supposed this oak to have been planted ; and so winding it gently off from the Wars of the Roses to the jolly days of ' bluff King Hal ;' congratulating it on its inland position, which saved it from forming part of that fleet whose thunders helped to destroy the Invincible Armada, speculating on its size and luxuriance in the peaceful time of that crowned wisacre whom Scottish parasites termed ' gentle King Jamie ;' and thinking how fervently its beauties must have been appreciated by his ill-starred son, to whose charge want of veneration could never have been laid as a fault. ' Here,' we thought, ' beneath these venerable arms, under the stately shade, how often has the unfortunate Stuart, the martyred Mon— Hulloh ! what is that ?—the note of a hound, as we are a living sinner and a gouty one ; but gout or no gout, we haven't seen hounds for a twelvemonth ; we must hobble on and have a look at them once more. But stay, there's their fox !—a beaten fox, by all the beauties of Diana !' and forthwith we gave vent to a

prolonged and, we rather flatter ourselves, not unmusical yell, which we should despair of conveying to the reader by any other means than oral demonstration. We used to pique ourselves upon doing it rather well, and, with one finger in the ear and a rubicund well-fed physiognomy, the effect is, to say the least of it, imposing, if not harmonious. Yes, there he was, stealing along, his back up, his fur draggled, tangled, and black with mire; his brush drooping, his tongue out, his long knavish countenance wobegone and indicative of thorough physical exhaustion, his whole instincts so intent on his pursuers that he scarcely turned aside at our salutation—there he was, dead-beat, and running short for his life, not a covert or an earth within two miles of him, and the best pack of hounds in England running frantic for his blood in the next field. See, he has nearly reached the old oak tree! one, two, three white hounds are through the fence, the rest following, like a stream of water set free from a dam. How they strain across the ridge and furrow, their bristles erect, their sterns lowered, their hungry eyes flaring out upon him with instinctive hate! He is creeping quite slowly now; but as Harmony and Fairplay near him he turns and shows a long, ominous, gleaming set of teeth. Over they roll, all three together. Marplot and Marygold are close upon them, hounds tumble over each other in hungry confusion, a crash is heard in the fence, and Charles Payne is off his horse in another moment and amongst them. A faint strident noise, like that of a smothered saw, grates upon the ear above the stifled ‘worry,’ ‘worry’ of the hounds,

and ere Charles, the pink of politeness, has time to touch his cap to ourselves (for he takes us for the parson, and therefore a stanch fox preserver, if not fox pursuer), he holds him high up in air, and with a loud 'Who-whoop' proclaims the conclusion of one of those 'best runs of the season' which occur at least once a fortnight.

Who-whoop! indeed. Three more sportsmen have by this time arrived, one over and the other two *through* the fence, which still hides the rest of the field from our eager gaze. Soon a gate opens, and some half a dozen more, including a couple of black coats, make their appearance. There are a good many still *coming*, and a large proportion of the original field that will never get here at all. No wonder; the pastures of Northamptonshire are full of them: they are scattered all over the country. Those who *have* arrived look wild and heated, and intensely pleased with themselves as they jump off their exhausted horses, and talk and laugh and gesticulate; the while Charles Payne throws the fox to the hounds with another encouraging 'Who-whoop!' and the clamorous baying of expectancy is exchanged for the 'worry, worry, worry' of fruition. 'Had a good thing?' we inquire of the first whip, who is appeasing a difference as to a tid-bit between Countess and Caroline. '*Carpital* thing, sir,' replies that affable functionary, whose cap and side are plastered with mud, and who looks as pleased as if some one had given him a hundred pounds. '*Carpital* thing, sir.' Brought him from Sulby gorse over the finest part of *our* country; never checked but once down by Cottes-

brooke; never touched a covert the whole blessed while! It's eleven miles if it's a yard, and I make it exactly an hour and fifteen minutes from the time I 'holloed' him away till we run into him in this here grass field just atween your reverence's legs. Whoop, my darlings! Worry, worry, worry! tear him an' eat him!' Cigars are lit, congratulations are exchanged, the bay horse and the brown horse and the chesnut horse receive their due share of praise, a reflective flattery somewhat in this wise: 'How well he carried you, old fellow; and what a stiff line! *I was close to you the whole time!*' From different versions and many contradictory statements we gather a tolerably correct notion of the run; and as its glories gradually flood our still enthusiastic imagination, it is with a pang of regret that we reflect we shall never see gallops such as these again.

We were there in spirit, nevertheless; we know every yard of the country, every field and every fence—though we can practise it no longer, we *think* we know every move in the game. We can fancy ourselves astride of a good horse by the side of Jack Woodcock as he views the fox away from the lower corner of the gorse. What a long, wiry, tough-looking animal it is, with a white tag to that handsome brush, which, as he steals across the neighbouring pasture, he whisks in derision, as much as to say, 'Gallop away, my fine fellows! according to your wont; hurry and hustle, and jump and splutter! The harder you ride the better for me!'

'Tally-ho!' shouts our friend Jack, erect in his stirrups. 'Twang' goes Charles Payne's horn from

the middle of the gorse. Already the owner of the covert is coming best pace round the corner. Trust him not to lose his start, and to make good use of it when he has got it. In twos and threes the hounds are pouring through the boundary fence; ten or twelve couple are settling to the scent; the rest, with ears erect, are flying to the cry. Now they stoop together with collective energy, and drive along over the grass in all the mute ecstasy of *pace*. A burst such as this is pastime for the gods!

It sobers our imaginary steed, our pen-and-ink Pegasus; he drops quietly to his bridle, and a turn in our favour enables us to pull him into a trot, and to look about us. Seven or eight men are in the same field with the hounds; half a dozen stiff fences and a couple of miles of grass have shaken off the larger portion of the field, but they are even now coming through a bridle-gate not far distant in the rear, and should a check unfortunately occur at this critical moment, they will be up in plenty of time to do lots of mischief still. But no; the pack is streaming on. 'Forward,' says Charles Payne, cramming his horn into its case, and gathering his horse for an 'oxer.' 'Forward!' echoes Mr. Villiers, 'doubling' it neatly on his right. 'Forward!' adds Mr. Cust, cracking the far-rail as he swings over the obstacle in his stride. 'Line!' shouts a Meltonian at an unfortunate aspirant whose horse is swerving to the thickest place in the fence. 'Serve him right!' remarks the Meltonian to himself, landing safely in the next field, while the aspirant rolls headlong to the earth. Jack Woodcock, with an amused smile, slips quietly by to the front.

Three or four more men, one in a black coat, enter the field at different points; that quiet gentleman *over*, not *through* the gate. A loose horse with streaming reins gallops wildly after the chase; and the hounds, with a burning scent, are pointing straight for Naseby Field.

And now every man hugs his trusty hunter by the head, and spares his energies as much as possible ere he encounters the yielding soil of that classic ground. Many a tired horse has Naseby Field to answer for, from the thundering battle-steeds of the Cavaliers, led by hot Prince Rupert, to the panting thoroughbreds of Jersey and Allix, and Cooke and Knightley, and the heroes of fifty years ago, who urged the mimic war over that eventful plain. Ay, down to our own times, when, although the plough has passed over its marshy surface, and draining and high-farming have given secure foothold to man and beast, many a sobbing steed and dejected rider can still bear witness to the exhaustive properties of that black adhesive soil, many a dirty coat and stationary hunter rues the noble impulse that *would* follow the fleeting pack over such a country as this after a three-days' rain.

Some of them begin to hope he may have entered the thick holding covert of Naseby Thorns, and that the conclusion of so rapid a burst may save their own and their horse's credit. But a countryman on the opposite hill is holloaing as if his throat must crack. Our fox is forward still; he has not a notion of entering the covert, warmed as he is by the merry pace of the last mile or so.

'No occasion to lift them, Charles,' observes Mr.

Villiers, as he lends an ear to the far-off countryman, and points to the streaming pack wheeling with every turn of the scent, like pigeons on the wing.

‘Couldn’t get near enough if there was. Come up, horse!’ mutters Charles in reply, as he bores through a black close-cut hedge, sinking up to the hocks on the taking-off side. There is no chance of a check now; and as the professed jester of the Hunt remarks, ‘If he don’t stop at Tally-ho, he may go on to Texas!’

The field, that enterprising body, whose self-dependence is so touchingly illustrated at every sign-post, are already somewhat hopelessly behindhand and considerably puzzled by the coincidence of two safe practicable lanes, leading equally in the direction of the line of chase. It divides accordingly into two hurrying columns, neither of which will in all probability see a hound again to-day.

So, ‘on we go again,’ leaving ‘Tally-Ho Gorse’ to the left, and up the hill for Hazelbeech, threading the fine old trees that tower upon its heights, and pointing ever onwards for the wide grassy vale of Cottesbrooke, spread out like a panorama before us, shut in by wooded hills, dotted with fine old standard trees, and smiling beautiful and peaceful in the chequered light of a February sun.

Thank Heaven! a check at last. Pegasus was beginning to want it sadly. He struck that top-rail uncommonly hard, and has dropped his hind legs in the last two consecutive ditches. There are still some half-dozen men with the hounds, but their horses look as if they had had nearly enough, and we are inclined to believe one or two of the riders are beginning to

wish it was over. The country for miles back is dotted with equestrians of every rank and every hue. A child on a pony has turned, not *headed* the fox. Charles Payne opines he cannot have entered the gorse with so 'warm a jacket,' as he phrases it; so he holds his hounds towards the plantations on his right. Fairplay whisks her stern about her sides, and drops a note or two to her comrades as they gather to the line.

'Yo-geote, old lady!' says Charles, in the inexplicable language of a huntsman.

'She's always right, that old bitch,' remarks Mr. Villiers, who has just turned Olympian's head for an instant to the wind.

'Twang' goes the horn once more, and away score the hounds through 'Pursar's Hills,' as if they were fresh out of the kennel, and over the wide grassy pastures below, and up the opposite rise, with untiring energy, leaving the foremost horseman toiling a field and a half behind them, till a pause and momentary hover in the Welford Road enables Pegasus and his comrades to reach them once more.

It is labour and sorrow now, yet is it a sweet and joyous pain. Still, we can hardly call that enjoyment which we wish was over; and most devoutly now do we all hope that we may soon kill this gallant fox, before *he* kills our gallant horses. The best blood of Newmarket is but mortal, after all; and Pegasus is by this time going most unreservedly on his own shoulders and his rider's hands.

Down the hill between Creaton and Holywell we make a tolerable fight; but though Olympian clears

the brook at the bottom, the rest of us flounder through. We have no false pride now, and do not any of us turn up our noses at gates or gaps, or other friendly egress. Everything is comparative. A country doctor on his fresh hack, meeting us at this period, opines we are going quite slow, but *we know better*; so does Pegasus, so does old Fairplay, so does the fox.

He is not travelling so straight now. Up and down yonder hedgerow the pack turn like harriers, and we think we must be very near him. But see: the crows are stooping yonder over a low black object in the distance. 'Tis the hunted fox, pointing straight for the coverts of Althorpe. He will never reach them, for the hounds are now close upon his track, and they run into him in the large grass field by Holmby House under the old oak tree.

* * * *

Our dream is over. Hounds and horses and sportsmen are all gone home. The excitement has evaporated, and left its usual depression of spirits behind. We are left alone—all alone—under the old oak tree. What is life at best but a dream? What is happiness but a dream?—fame, honour, love, ambition? Dreams all. The bitterness is in the waking.

Let us put the clock back a couple of centuries or so, when the old oak was stately and vigorous as now, his branches as spreading, his stem as gnarled and knotted, his growth as majestic. What a lesson to us creatures of a day, in our short span of earthly existence, is instilled by the comparative duration of

these vegetable giants! How they outlive us! How their 'winter of discontent,' unlike our own, is annually succeeded by a spring of promise! How they spread and tower upwards into heaven, whilst we grovel upon earth. *Væ miki!* 'twere a weary world, my masters, if there were nothing beyond. A weary world! Let us put the clock back, I say, and dream again.

CHAPTER II.

A CAST OF HAWKS.

SHE was hatched on a snow-topped, bluff-faced cliff towering over the iron-bound coast of Iceland. The parental eyrie, hundreds of feet above the level of the sea, was strewed with bones and feathers, and all the warlike spoils of her predatory progenitors. Her infancy was fed on blood warm from the living victim, her youth trained in long flights over the dark seething ocean; so her spirit knew not what it was to quail, nor her wing to droop.

But a daring cliffsman, one of those whose pastime and whose profession it is to undertake risks such as quiet men shudder even to read of, made his appearance one clear frosty night at the entrance of her home, and awed her with the immediate presence of the human face divine, never seen before. Well might she be astonished, for the cliff was a sheer precipice, rising perpendicularly from many a fathom deep of ocean, and the eyrie was securely placed some hundred feet or more below its landward edge, a giddy height indeed above the restless sea, heaving and surging down yonder in the darkness. Three strands of a rope in the numbed grasp of a comrade were between the cliffsman and eternity, yet his nerve was totally unmoved, his hand steady, his face not even pale.

Quietly he selected the most promising bird from the eyrie; and she, the very essence of whose existence had been freedom, wild as the winds and waves themselves, must be a captive now for evermore.

At first she pined sadly: her bright keen eye grew dim, her feathers lost their gloss, her wings their sweep and vigour. She was breaking her untamed heart, like a wild-hawk as she was, but custom and discipline at length prevailed. Her feminine spirit, half won and half subdued, yielded to the combined influence of kindness and coercion. Ere she reached England in a merchant-ship she would perch contentedly on the deck, sunning herself for hours in the pure sea air. She would take food eagerly from the hand at which she once fought and tore. She was tamed at last, that winsome wild-bird, ready for the lure, and the bells, and the jesses; willing, under man's tuition, to become more than ever an inveterate enemy to her kind.

So they sold her for ten gold pieces to a north-country lord, and the north-country lord being *more suorum*, a judge of horseflesh, exchanged her away to Sir Giles Allonby for a dapple grey palfrey; and now she sits, jessed and hooded, under the old oak tree at Holmby, far and away the best falcon within forty miles of fair Northampton town.

So thinks the falconer standing yonder, with his perches slung from his broad shoulders, and his hooded pupils sitting contentedly thereon, who would wager his new doublet and his Christmas fee on the success of her, the pride of his mews. So thinks the lithe active lad his assistant, in whose grasp those

handsome spaniels are straining at the leash, and who clings to his opinion with the glorious tenacity of sixteen. So think those two jolly-looking serving-men who are in waiting, and who seem to have no earthly thing to do save to crack broad English jokes, and to laugh at them with their broad English faces. So thinks fair Grace Allonby, whose nature it is to pet and love every mortal thing that comes within her reach. So thinks good Sir Giles himself, who only yester evening over his claret was loud in the praises of his favourite, and eager to match her against all and everything on the wing.

‘Let them come,’ said the stout old knight, ‘with their purses in their hands. My Lord Vaux, my Lord Montague, my Lord Goring, Colepepper, Carnarvon, and the rest, within fifty miles of this spot—ay, within the bounds of Britain itself—Peer or Puritan, Cavalier or Roundhead—always excepting the falcons of his most blessed Majesty. Let them come with their hawks, every feather of ’em, and “Diamond” shall have a flight at them all!’

It was a glorious morning for the sport. The sky was clear and blue, softened here and there with light dappled clouds; dew-drops sparkled in the sun from thorn and briar, while the earth exhaled new life and fragrance from her teeming bosom, moistened but not saturated with the late genial rain. How blithe and gladsome was the lark’s shrill song as he mounted cheerily into the sky, such a speck against that glorious fathomless blue—how soft and mellow the sunlight on the uplands—how sweet the perfume of the free fresh air!—sight, smell, and hearing all

gratified at once. What a morning for hawking, or indeed for any manly, vigorous, out-of-door pursuit.

‘The knight is late this morning,’ remarked the falconer, a man of few words, and whose whole energies were wrapped up in his profession; ‘and the wind is changing even now,’ he added, with an anxious glance at the heavens, whilst ‘Diamond’ stirred uneasily on her perch, jingling her bells, and moving her hooded head from side to side with characteristic impatience.

‘Drinking the King’s health overnight,’ remarked one of the serving-men, with a leer at his comrade. ‘Liquor and loyalty make sleepy heads in the morning; is’t not so, Will? Thou wast ringing chimes in the buttery thyself, lad.’

Will shook his head, as who should say, ‘I follow the example of my betters,’ but answered not a word; and indeed in those days late sittings, large flagons, and bumper healths were the daily custom of the age; and the strong ale flowed as freely in the hall as did the red wine in the banqueting-room or the dinner-parlour.

But there was a stir amongst the group under the old oak tree; the falconer’s eye brightened, the serving-men sprang to an attitude of respectful attention, and the spaniels fawned and whined, and strained in the leash, for a party of three equestrians were approaching; up the hill they swung at a dashing hand-gallop, and cantering over the smooth sward with feathers waving, habits fluttering, bridles jingling, and palfreys snorting, pulled up under the oak, and returned the salutation of their inferiors with the

frank courtesy that is always the stamp of good-breeding and high birth.

‘What a morning for us, lads!’ remarked Sir Giles to the retainers, with a kindly smile lighting up his ruddy countenance, still handsome and high-bred, though marked with many a deep and furrowed line, the inevitable consequence of a hard life spent in much excitement, much anxiety, much danger, and some excess. ‘We flushed a brace of herons as we came along the river-side at Brampton; and a fairer flight than one of the beauties made I never wish to see. Ah, “Diamond!” don’t know the old man’s voice? Come to my wrist, old lass! Soh! soh!’ and Sir Giles caressed the hooded bird, and smoothed her neck plumage with a loving hand as she fluttered sagaciously to take her well-known place on the glove of the old Cavalier.

Sir Giles Allonby was a specimen of the old English gentleman such as no other country but England could produce; such as the troublous times in which his lot was cast brought out in all its excellence, and all its faults. In person he was tall, spare, and sinewy, framed for a horseman, a swordsman, or a sportsman; for success in any bodily exercise demanding strength, quickness, and agility. Field-sports and campaigning had toughened him into the consistency of pin-wire; but the same causes, coupled with a considerable amount of deep-drinking, had hardened the almost feminine beauty of his countenance into a type strangely at variance with the delicate chiselling of its small features, and the mirthful glances of its bright blue eyes. It seemed a contradiction to see that

oval face so rugged and war-worn, that well-trimmed moustache and carefully-pointed beard so white, those soft curling locks so thin and grey. The man himself corresponded in his inward character to his outward appearance. Generous, enthusiastic, and chivalrous, he was passionate, prejudiced, and obstinate. Quick to resent insult with blow or sword-thrust, he he would forgive and embrace the bitterest enemy who should move a hair's-breadth towards reconciliation; though he would lift his hat on entering a poor man's cottage, and address his dame with as much courteous deference as a duchess, no Cavalier alive was such a thoroughgoing aristocrat in his reverence for what he called 'blood'—not one of his Norman ancestors could have expressed a greater contempt for the puddle that stagnated through the peasant's veins, as compared with the generous fluid that warmed his own, though he would fling his gold pieces about to all that asked for them, he would screw his tenants to the uttermost, nor stop short of what we should now call acts of violence and rapine, to raise men and horses for the king; and when his wife died, whom he had loved with all the unrestrained ardour with which such a nature could not but love a kindly, handsome, gentle, generous woman, although devotion to the crown, which he called loyalty, became the one guiding impulse of his life, Grace herself, his lovely daughter Grace, was second in his estimation to his sovereign, and in that sovereign's cause he would not have scrupled to sacrifice even her, his sweet, dutiful, and loving child.

She is reining in her horse with a graceful but somewhat timid air, and appears not too well pleased at

the caresses and attentions of those busy spaniels, to which the steed replies with a degree of playful restlessness not quite agreeable to his rider. Grace is a sad coward, and though she spends much of her life on horseback, like other gentlewomen of her time, she has never acquired the perfect self-possession and masculine ease which sit so well upon her companion, yonder lady, whose long curls are waving in the wind, whose soft blue eyes are deepening and dancing with animation, whose lip and cheek are blushing carnation in the fresh morning air, under the rays of the bright morning sun.

‘Give him a gallop, Gracey,’ says she, with a ringing laugh at her friend’s obvious misgivings. ‘Why, Sir Giles himself could hardly ride my Bayard if I let him get as fresh as you do that riotous pet of yours. Silly Grace, you spoil everything you come near. What a tyrant you *will* make of your husband, my dear, if ever you get one!’ and she bent her beautiful figure to pat her horse’s neck in a bewitching attitude, which was not lost, as it was not meant to be, on old Sir Giles, or the busy falconer, or the grinning serving-man, nay, not even on the lad of sixteen, who gazed on her open-mouthed, with a ludicrous expression of stupified amazement and delight.

Mary Cave dearly loved admiration wherever she could get it. Left early in life to her own devices, brought up chiefly abroad, and transferred from a foreign convent to a foreign court, she had acquired, even in the first flush of youth, a habit of self-reliance and a decision of character seldom to be observed in those of the softer sex who have not passed through

the crucible of much pain and much tribulation. Clever and quick-witted, with strong passions and strong feelings, she nursed an ambition which was stronger than them all. She had the knack, partly natural, partly the result of keen observing powers, of detecting at once the mental value, and, so to speak, the moral weight, of those with whom she came in contact; and this gift, so dangerous to a woman, necessarily imparted a harshness to her character, and robbed her of that trusting, clinging tendency which is woman's greatest charm. Young as she was, she busied herself in all the intrigues of the day, and her beauty, her fascinating manners, her extraordinary influence over everything that wore a beard, rendered her a most dangerous enemy, a most desirable and efficient partisan. From her kinsman's house at Boughton she corresponded with the leading men of the Cavalier party, and Lord Vaux himself, in all his wisdom of years and experience of intrigue, was indebted to beautiful Mary Cave for many a happy resource, many a deep-laid and successful scheme.

Every one in the house adored her. The respectful and austere *major-domo*, a condition of whose very existence it was to preserve on all occasions a demeanour of supernatural decorum, would follow her about with his eyes, and dodge after her with flowers and porcelain and choice old glass, and every device he could think of, to win the reward of a word and a smile; and the little page-boy, the lowest of all the varlets in the establishment, spent a whole night on the staircase in darkness and tears, when he heard

that 'Mistress Mary was ill at ease, and troubled with a slight cold.'

So she turned and wound them all round her finger—and why not? The lower animals have their natural arms, offensive and defensive; the ox his horns, the tiger his claws, the serpent his guile, man his obstinacy, and woman her beauty: the last is the most fearful weapon of all, and right well does she know its advantages and its use.

Even now old Sir Giles, keen sportsman as he is, cannot but feel that his attention to the business of the day is much distracted by his daughter's friend; that if 'Diamond' *could* have a rival in his admiration and attention, it would be beautiful Mary Cave.

She ought to be very happy, speeding along in all the enjoyment of health and power, and conscious charms, and the delightful motion of Bayard's easy gallop. And yet there is a little black imp sitting behind her that no gallop on earth can shake off—a secret sorrow nestling at that proud wayward heart which no triumphs of beauty and influence can stifle or eradicate. Both girls laugh out merrily as they fly along, but timid Grace Allonby is alarmed about herself; dauntless Mary Cave is uneasy about another: the latter's frame of mind is the least enviable of the two.

And now the little party are winding slowly along the brook-side in the valley down by Althorpe. Many a noble elm and stately oak nods above their heads, many a patch of sedge and rushes shakes and rustles to the quest of the busy spaniels and the long poles of the falconer and his assistants. Far and wide, to

right and left, extends a prairie-like and undulating pasture, nourishing here and there a few scattered flocks feeding in the sun. Near one or two small hamlets, a few posts and rails, or an old straggling overgrown hedge, denote an attempt at cultivation and enclosure, but the general character of the district is wild, nomadic, and provocative of galloping.

‘What a country for a flight!’ says Mary Cave, bringing her obedient horse alongside of the old knight’s well-trained steed, and loosening the jesses of the hawk upon her wrist, no unworthy rival to ‘Diamond’ herself. ‘Look well to your laurels to-day, Sir Giles. “Dewdrop” and her mistress are both bent on victory, and I shall wear the heron’s plume to-night in my hair or never hawk again!’

Even as she spoke the short shrill bark of a spaniel, and a rush of his companions towards a sedgy, marshy piece of ground, startled Grace Allonby and her palfrey out of the pleasant mutual understanding to which they had arrived, and a glorious wide-winged heron rose slowly into the air, flapping his way with heavy measured strokes, his long legs tucked behind him, his little head thrown back, his sharp scissors-like beak protruding over the distended crop, heavy with the spoils of last night’s fishing excursion. Mary’s quick eye has caught him in an instant. Like lightning she has freed her hawk from hood and jesses, and with the same movement that urges her horse to a canter, ‘Dewdrop’ is tossed aloft into the air.

Sir Giles is not much slower in his arrangements. Like an old sportsman, he is methodical in all matters connected with the field, but ‘Diamond’ understands

her master, and her master can depend on 'Diamond,' so she is not three strokes of her wing behind her rival, and soaring at once high into the air, has caught sight of prey and competitor almost before the heron is aware of his two natural and implacable foes.

Too soon, however, it strikes him that his position is one of imminent and mortal danger. With a grating harsh cry, a 'crake, crake,' of mingled discomfort and alarm, he proceeds slowly to disgorge from his pouch the weighty spoils of his overnight's sport. The dead fish glisten white and silvery as they fall through the sunny air, and the lightened heron, whose instinct teaches him there is no safety but on high, wheels upwards by a series of gyrations farther and farther still, till he seems but a speck in the bright element to the straining eyes that are watching the flight from below. But there is another higher still than he is, and yet another wheeling rapidly upward to gain the desired point of 'vantage.' The topmost speck falls suddenly headlong several hundred feet, past the pursued and his pursuer, down, down, nearly to the summit of a huge old elm, but recovering herself, once more resumes her flight, with even greater vigour and determination than at first.

'Peste! elle a manquée!' exclaims Mary in the language of her youth, while a flush of vexation burns on her handsome features, and she admonishes her steed with hand and rein to make no more 'mistakes' like that last, at a time when earthly considerations should not be allowed to divert his rider's attention from the business going on above. 'Dewdrop' has

indeed made a failure, and she seeks in vain to wipe out the disgrace, for 'Diamond' has now gained the vantage point, and swooping down like a thunderbolt, beak and talons, and weight and impetus, all brought to bear at once on the devoted heron, brings him headlong with her through the air, turning over and over in their fall to that green earth from which he will never rise again.

And now Sir Giles is riding for his life, spurring his good horse across the rushy pastures, keen and happy and triumphant as a boy at his falcon's success; whilst Mary dashes along by his side, inwardly provoked, though she is too proud to show it, at the failure of her favourite; and Grace, with fretting palfrey and secret misgivings, follows carefully at a less break-neck pace in the rear.

It is a service of danger to take a heron from a hawk, or a hawk from a heron, even after the most prolonged and exhausting flight. The victim, breathless and stunned though he be, has generally sufficient strength and energy left to make good use of the sharp and formidable weapon with which nature has provided him; and as the thrusts of his long beak are delivered with extraordinary accuracy, and aimed always at *the eye* of his captor, he is a formidable opponent even in the last struggles of defeat and death.

'A fair flight, Mistress Mary, and an honest victory,' said Sir Giles, as he plucked a long shapely feather from the dead bird's wing, and presented it with playful courtesy to his antagonist. "'Diamond" is still unconquered, and you shall wear the heron's

plume to-night in your bonnie locks in token of forgiveness! Said I well, sweetheart?’

‘Sir Giles, I might forgive a fault, but I *never* forgive a failure,’ was the laughing reply; yet to a keen observer the expression of her face, the curl of her ruddy lip as she spoke, would have denoted more truth in the sentiment than she would herself perhaps have been willing to admit.

‘I am sorry for the poor heron,’ was all Grace Allonby remarked, as they remounted their horses to commence their homeward journey.

CHAPTER III.

THE QUARRY.

AND a lovely ride they had over the wild moorland and the green undulations that waved between the wooded hill of Holmby, and the sweet fragrant valley along which the quiet Nene was stealing his silver way. Those were the days when the early morning air was esteemed the best cosmetic for the cheek of beauty, when ladies did not sit over the fire till dusk and then flutter out like birds of night for a gentle stroll to the hothouses, or a half-hour's saunter in a pony-carriage. Our little party had breakfasted at daybreak, had been in the saddle since the sun was up, and had got their day's sport concluded by the time that we of the modern school would have finished breakfast. There is nothing like early rising. We have ourselves tried it, and we speak from experience when we insist that it is profitable, poetical, healthy, and invigorating; nevertheless candour compels us to admit that for its systematic practice we entertain a cordial detestation.

A lovely ride they had. In front of them extended the rich valley of the Nene, smiling with cultivation, dotted with trees and hedgerows, and standard thorns growing stunted and sturdy here and there, backed by the distant buildings of Northampton and the

light cloud of white smoke that curled above the town. To their left wide and uncultivated moorlands, with occasional stretches of vivid green pasture, and many a patch of gorse and clump of alders, swept away over the rising eminence of Spratton (on the sky-line of which a string of packhorses could clearly be distinguished as they neared the little hamlet where they would stop and refresh), and melted into a dim haze of beauty under the crest of Hazelbeeceh, crowned with a swarthy grove of giant forest trees, frowning down on the sunny valley below; behind them, sharp cutting against the sky, a long level plain, that was ere long to earn its immortality under the name of Naseby Field, showed clear and hard and cheerless, as though its only harvest was to be the gathering of the slaughter; while the towers and pinnacles of Holmby Palace itself shut in the picture in their immediate vicinity. On their right a bank of waving gorse hid all beyond its own wild beauties with its sharp dark verdure, and its little yellow blossoms scattered like the drops of a golden shower over its surface. Sir Giles plucked one as he passed with a sly smile, 'When the gorse is out of bloom, young ladies,' quoth Sir Giles, 'then is kissing out of fashion!' Grace Allonby laughed and blushed, and playfully bid her father 'not talk nonsense;' but Mary Cave, drawing her horse nearer to that of her gentle friend, commenced moralizing after her own fashion on the old knight's trite and somewhat coarse remark.

'Yes, Gracey,' said she, smoothing back the folds of her rich brown hair, which shone and glistened in

the sun, 'Sir Giles is right. So it is, and so it has ever been. There is no day in the year when the blossom is off the gorse, from the brightest splendours of July to the bitterest snowstorms of December. There is no phase of life, from the triumph of success to the agony of disappointment, which is not affected by woman's influence and woman's smile. I used to wish, dear, that I had been born a man. I thank my fate now that I am a woman. I have more *power* as I am, and *power* is what I love best in the world. They are only puppets, Gracey, after all; and if we are but true to ourselves, it is for us to pull the strings and set the figures moving at our will. I saw a pretty toy once at the French Court that was brought there in a box by a certain Italian juggler, in which little dressed-up dolls acted a mystery in dumb show, and the juggler, sitting in his dark corner, managed all the wires, and made each play its appointed part. Grace, I thought to myself, men are but dressed-up dolls after all; it is women that have the strings in their hands, if they will but use them. I have never let one go yet, my dear, and I never will. Confess—is it not delightful to have one's own way?'

'I should think it must be,' replied Grace, who never could get hers, even with her horse; 'and yet it must be a great responsibility, too,' she added, with a look of profound reflection. 'I think I would rather give way, that is, if I *liked* people; and I don't think I could like anybody very much that I wasn't a little afraid of.'

Mary's lip curled contemptuously, yet a pang shot through her too. Was there one before whom her

proud spirit would quail—for whom that eager undisciplined heart would ache with a pain only known to the strong tameless nature? It is the wild bird that beats itself to death against the bars of its cage; the wild flower that droops and withers in the close confinement of a hot-house. Woe to him whom Mary loved, if he loved her too! Nevertheless, she laughed merrily as she replied, ‘Nonsense, Grace, *afraid*. I never feared mortal thing yet, and least of all would I fear a man that professed himself to be my slave; and yet, dear, I have my own ideas of what a man ought to be. Mind, I don’t say I know *one* that comes up to them. He should be proud as Lucifer—not in appearance and demeanour, far from it. I would have him courteous and kindly to all, gentle and chivalrous and conciliating in his manners, but at heart unimpressionable and unyielding as adamant. I would have him cherish some high ambition, to which he would sacrifice all that was dearest to him in life, ay, sacrifice *me* myself if he loved me to madness; and he should smile when he did it as if nothing could make him wince or waver in his purpose. He must be clever, of course, and looked on with admiration and envy by his fellow-men, or he would be no mate for *me*; and he must give way to me for an instant on no single point more than I would to him.’

Grace opened her large dark eyes with astonishment: she had her mother’s eyes, as Sir Giles often remarked, dark and soft and full like a fawn’s.

‘And if you were both so obstinate,’ observed

Grace, 'and you loved him so very much, what would you do if you disagreed?'

'I would break my heart, but I would never yield an inch!' was the reply; 'or I would break *his*, to hate myself ever afterwards, and love him, perhaps, none the worse for that.'

While she spoke a light broke over Mary's countenance which softened it into beauty such as struck even her companion with a new and fervent admiration, but it faded as it came, and her features soon recovered their usual joyous, careless, and somewhat hard expression of self-dependence and self-satisfaction.

But Grace's womanly nature, true to itself, recoiled from such sentiments as these. 'Indeed, Mary,' said she, 'I think it would be very uncomfortable. If I liked anybody so much, I should wish him to like me too, and I would give in to him on every single point, and find out everything he wanted, and try to make him happy; and if I failed I should not be angry with *him*, but I think I should be very miserable, and I am sure I should sit down and cry. But I should not like him to be such a person as you describe. I would rather have him good looking and good natured, and cheerful, and brave certainly, and I should not mind his being a little hasty, and *very* loyal to the king, and—like my father, in short, but younger, of course, and—don't laugh at me, Mary—I think I should like him to have dark eyes and hair.'

'Oh, Grace, what a child you are!' was the reply; and Mary put her horse once more into a canter, and raised his mettle with voice and hand, turning

and winding him at her will, and seeking vent for the exuberance of her spirits or the depth of her feelings—for no mortal ever was allowed to penetrate her *real* sentiments—in the delightful exercise of skilful equitation.

But to give our reader some slight insight into the character of this young lady, still young in years and beauty, though matured in knowledge of the world, we must be permitted to recount a little scene that occurred at the royal palace of Hampton Court a year or two previous to the events we have now taken upon us to describe.

One of the merry masks or pageants which were the delight of our ancestors, and which were keenly appreciated by royalty itself, had just been concluded; the great nobles of the Court had left the Presence; the King himself had retired to his apartments harassed and fatigued with the responsibilities of a ruler, and the many difficulties which in all ranks hedge in the movements of an opinionated man. None but the Queen and her immediate household, with two or three especial favourites and high officers of the Court, were left; and Henrietta's French love of gaiety and natural flow of spirits prompted her to seize the opportunity of relaxing for half an hour the decorum and formality which have ever been distinguishing characteristics of the English Court.

'A game at forfeits! A *cotillon!* and a forfeit for the loser, to be decided by my ladies and myself. Marguerite!—Marie! That will be charming,' exclaimed her Majesty, clapping her hands in the exuberance of her merriment, her keen eyes sparkling, and

her little French person quivering with delight at the prospect.

‘*Dancez, milor ! voilà le jeu qui commence !*’ and she gave her hand with much dignity to the most accomplished young nobleman of his time, whose air of self-possession and gravity was somewhat at variance with the general mirth and festivity of the other courtiers, and herself commenced the measure, in which all were in duty bound to join.

It was a foolish game, somewhat provocative of levity, and calculated to have given scandal to the Puritans of the time, involving much dancing, changes of partners, and the infliction of quaint forfeits on those who failed in its complicated conditions. A venerable Lady of the Bedchamber was condemned to dance ‘a saraband’ with a certain future Chancellor, whose forte was scarcely bodily grace or agility. A young maid of honour, blushing to the tips of her fingers, had to receive the homage, offered on their knees, of all the gentlemen there present. And lastly, Mary Cave, then attached to the person of the Queen, was adjudged to stand in the midst of the admiring throng, and accept a chaste salute from an individual of the opposite sex, to be chosen by lot.

‘No, sir !’ said the Queen, as the future Chancellor, who imagined himself to be the happy man, stepped forward, with a gay and *debonair* demeanour, to exact the penalty ; ‘it is reserved for a younger man—and a better courtier,’ she added, somewhat lower, but loud enough for the mortified candidate to overhear. ‘Stand forward, Marie,’ she proceeded,

laughing roguishly; 'and you, milor! claim your rights!'

It was the same young nobleman who had already been honoured with her Majesty's hand in the dance; who had acquitted himself with the ease and grace of an accomplished cavalier, but with a grave and pre-occupied air, as of one whose thoughts were far away from scenes of mirth and revelry, and who now stepped forward with a profound reverence to claim from Mistress Mary Cave a penalty which any other gentleman in the presence would have readily given his best hawk, his best hound, or his best horse to exact.

And this was the only man in the room on whom she would have hesitated for an instant to confer that which was in those times accounted a mere mark of courtesy and friendly regard. She would have offered her cheek to any one of them, from intriguing Harry Jermyn to profligate George Goring, without moving a muscle of her proud cold face; but when this young nobleman approached her with his chivalrous deference of manner, and his simple, courteous, self-possessed air, Mary felt her heart beating, and knew her cheek was blushing, as heart and cheek had never beat and blushed before.

He was her master, and *she knew it*. Slight as was their acquaintance, she had seen and heard enough of him to be aware that his was a strong stern nature, keen of intellect and indomitable of will, which she had no chance of ever subjugating—that his mind was of that superior order which breaks through the meshes of pleasure and dispels the illusions of romance. Her woman's instinct told her that he nourished some

lofty purpose, which woman's influence would never be suffered to affect ; and simply because she knew it was quite impossible that she could ever win his homage, like a very woman, she would have given her heart's blood to possess it, if only for an hour.

He stepped up to her, slowly and courteously. He did not even take her hand ; but he lifted one of the long brown ringlets that fell heavily across her bosom, pressed it to his lips, dropped it, and retired, with another low reverence, and without ever raising his eyes to her face.

He slept calmly and peacefully that night. When he woke on the morrow, his thoughts were of the great Cause and the country's good ; of measures and principles, and counsellors—of judicious laws and a happy people ; of ancient sages and classic patriotism ; a little of his fair young wife, whom he loved with a sober, temperate, and rational love ;—and he rose to pray earnestly for strength and means to carry out the great work on which his heart and soul were bent.

Her rest was fitful and broken, disturbed by strange wild dreams, of which the central figure was still a slight and nervous form, a keen, dark intellectual face, a compressed and resolute lip—the lip that had caressed her hair. She had detached that ringlet from the rest, and lay with her hands folded over it, and clasping it to her bosom. When she rose, it was to a new and strange sensation—to a wild, keen thrill of pleasure, dashed with shame—to a galling feeling of subjection, that had yet in it a dependence most delightful. She would have been torn in pieces rather

than confess it even to herself, but she loved Falkland, and it was a changed world to Mary Cave from that night for ever after!

The gambols of one of them are apt to disturb the equanimity of all the rest of the equine race who are within hearing and sight of such vagaries. Nor was Grace Allonby's palfrey, on whom its mistress could never be induced to impose proper terms of coercion, any exception to this general rule of insubordination.

Ere our little party had descended into the valley of Brampton, and reached the ford by which they were to cross the river, poor Grace was certainly no longer mistress of the animal she rode; and it was with a pitiable expression of helplessness and terror on her countenance, at which even her father and her companion could scarce help laughing, that she plunged into the ford, now somewhat swollen and turbulent from the late rain.

'Father! what shall I do? He's going to lie down!' screamed Grace, as the wilful palfrey, turning his head to the stream, plunged and pawed into deeper water, that already drenched his rider's skirts to the waist. Mary Cave was ere this on the opposite side with Sir Giles; the latter, turning suddenly to his daughter's assistance, checked his horse so fiercely that the animal reared straight on end, and then struck his spurs so deep into its sides that the good horse grew restive, and refused to face the water on such terms; and Grace might at least have experienced a very complete wetting, had it not been for the assistance of another cavalier, who, coming up at

a smart trot from behind, dashed in to the rescue of the astonished girl, and himself guiding her palfrey to the bank, brought her, with many apologies for his timely interference, in safety to her father's side.

'Well and promptly done, young sir,' said Sir Giles, as, after wringing the wet from his daughter's habit, and replacing her on her horse, he turned to thank the new comer for his unexpected assistance. 'May I inquire to whom I have the honour of being so much indebted?' added the courteous old Cavalier.

The stranger reined in his horse, and lifting his hat, made a profound bow as he replied, 'My name is Humphrey Bosville, cornet in Colepepper's Horse, and about to join his Majesty's forces at Newbury. I have orders to proceed to Boughton, with despatches for Lord Falkland. Am I in the right road?'

Mary's eye sparkled and her cheek flushed.

'For Lord Falkland?' she inquired; 'is he, then, expected by Lord Vaux?'

The cornet made another profound bow as he replied in the affirmative; but he too blushed to encounter the glance of those deep blue eyes, and the self-possession with which he had commenced the interview seemed to have entirely deserted him, though he accepted willingly and courteously the hospitable invitation of Sir Giles to his kinsman's house.

'You are just in time for dinner, sir. My lord will be well pleased to see you or any other gallant Cavalier. Had we met you an hour sooner we could have shown you as fair a flight as often falls to a sports-

man's lot to behold. I can show you now the best hawk in Christendom. But you are in time for dinner, sir; and we will give you a hearty welcome, and drink the King's health after it in a stoup of claret worthy of the toast!

As they mounted the hill toward Boughton, the ladies, we may be sure, did not lose the opportunity of closely inspecting the person and general appearance of Grace's new acquaintance; and truth to tell, Humphrey Bosville's exterior was one of those on which the feminine eye dwells with no slight complacency.

A trifle above the middle size, well and strongly built, with a frame promising the vigour of manhood, added to the activity of youth, our cornet sat his strong chesnut, or to use the language of the time, his sorrel horse, with the graceful ease of a man who has from boyhood made the saddle his home. Like a true Cavalier, his dress and arms exhibited as much splendour as was compatible with the exigencies of active service,—a good deal more of variety than in these days of Prussian uniformity would be permitted to a soldier. On his head he wore a wide Spanish hat, adorned with a huge drooping feather, his buff coat was cut and slashed in the most approved fashion, and a rich silk scarf of deep crimson wound about his waist to mark the contour of his symmetrical figure. His pistols were richly mounted, his sword of the longest, his spurs of the heaviest; all his appointments marked the gentleman and the man of war, dashed with the not inappropriate or unpleasing coxcombry of youth. His oval face, shaded by the long curling lovelocks so much affected by his party, bore

a winning expression of almost feminine softness, attributable to his large well-cut hazel eyes,—such eyes as belong to dispositions at once imaginative and impressionable rather than judicious and discerning ; but his high, regular features, straight eyebrows, and determined lip, shaded by a heavy moustache, redeemed the countenance from a charge of effeminaey, and stamped on him the bold, resolute character of a ‘man of action,’ one that could be depended on when the brave were striking for their lives.

‘He is very well favoured, your new friend,’ whispered Mary Cave, with a roguish smile ; ‘and Gracey, there must be “something in it.” Look if he has not got *dark eyes and hair.*’

CHAPTER IV.

'FALKLAND.'

LORD VAUX is pacing his old hall at Boughton, with a scroll in his hand, on which his attention seems but partially fixed. Ever and anon he lifts his eyes to the stained glass windows, through which the noonday light is streaming in floods of crimson, and purple, and orange; but his thoughts are far from armorial bearings and ancestral pomp. Ever and anon he rivets them on the polished oak floor beneath his feet, but still he fails to derive the required inspiration for his task. Like the rest of his party, the Cavalier is puzzled by the hopelessness of proving 'two and two to make five.' His fine benevolent head, from which the long hair falls in clusters over his starched ruff and black velvet doublet, is that of a philosopher and a sage, one whose natural element is study and contemplation rather than action and conflict with his kind; yet must Lord Vaux calculate men, and means, and munitions of war, ay, don breastplate and backpiece, and if need be, leave the splendours of his home and the quiet retirement of his study for the hardships of campaigning,—the wild alarms of a stricken field.

He listens anxiously for an expected footstep. Like many another contemplative nature, he is prone

to place dependence on those who show no hesitation in taking the initiative. He is capable of enthusiasm, generosity, and self-sacrifice, but an example must be set him for the exhibition of these virtues. Without some one to show him the way, his lordship would never move a step in any direction, right or wrong. How many such natures were forced into the stream of political strife by the exigencies of the times in which they lived! How many were willing to suffer fines, humiliation, and imprisonment for a cause which they esteemed sacred solely because their fathers did. Old men of fourscore years were simple and enthusiastic as boys. Lord Vaux, now past middle age, found himself, at a period of life when most men are willing to seek ease and repose, involved in all the intrigues of statesmanship and the labours of civil war. Cavaliers and Roundheads, the two watchwords of party, had set Merry England by the ears. The precise Puritan, with his close-cropped hair, his sad-coloured raiment, his long sword, and biblical phraseology, was up and in the field under the same discipline which scarce served to control the excesses of his roystering enemy, the swaggering, dissipated, reckless, yet chivalrous Cavalier, whose code of duty and morality seemed but to consist of two principles, if so they could be called, viz., to drink, and strike for the king.

Such was the extreme type of either party, and to one or other must sober men of all ranks and ages more or less incline.

But a step is heard in the outer hall, the tramp of horses strikes upon the ear, the bustle of servants

marshalling an honoured and expected guest breaks on the stillness of the well-ordered household, and a smile of inexpressible relief lights up Lord Vaux's face as he advances to greet his guest with all the ceremonious cordiality of an old English welcome.

'I have ridden far, my lord,' said the new arrival, 'to taste your hospitality; and in these times we can scarce promise to repeat our visits to our friends. But, my lord, you seem anxious and ill at ease. You have suffered no affliction at home, I trust? You have no bad news of the Cause?'

'I am indeed harassed and at my wits' end,' was the reply, 'or I could scarce have failed to give your lordship a kinder and more hospitable welcome. But I am, in sooth, right glad to see you; for to your ingenuity and to your advice I must look in my present straits. This is no question of a crabbed Greek reading, or a complicated equation, such as we delighted in happier days to grapple withal, but a serious requirement of men, horses, and money for his Most Sacred Majesty; a requirement that, with all our resources, we shall be unable to fulfil, and yet without which the Cause is well nigh hopeless. Does Goring think I am like the alchemist we have read of, and can transmute these old oak carvings to unalloyed gold? or does that reckless adventurer believe me to be even as himself? to regard neither honour nor credit, mercy nor justice, and to fear neither God, nor man, nor devil?'

'Goring is a useful tool where he is placed, my lord,' was the reply; 'and we could ill spare him in our present difficulties, though sad it is so fair a cause

should require the support of such as he has proved himself. Nevertheless, permit me to look over the requirement. It may be that we can see our way more plainly by our joint endeavours, than when we fight single-handed against that deadliest of foes, an empty military chest.'

As he spoke he took the scroll from Lord Vaux's hand with a courteous bow, and retiring into one of the deep windows of the hall, was soon busily engaged in the perusal of its contents.

Lucius Carey, Viscount Falkland, was one of those men on whom no remarkable exterior stamps the superiority which they enjoy over their fellow-creatures. As he stands in the embrasure of that window, his countenance grave and heated, his dress disordered with riding, his gestures of surprise and vexation, awkward and ungainly, the superficial observer would pronounce him to be a mere ordinary, somewhat ill-looking mortal, plainly dressed, and bearing the marks neither of gentle birth nor mental culture. He is short and small of stature, of no imposing port, not even with the assumption of energy and bustling activity which so often characterizes the movements of little men. His manner is unaffected and plain to simplicity; he stoops and sways his body from side to side in ludicrous unconsciousness, as wave after wave of thought comes rolling in upon his brain, pregnant with reflection, calculation, and resource. When he speaks his voice is harsh and unmusical, his countenance dark and unprepossessing, for he is labouring in mind, wrestling with a difficulty, and bringing all the powers of his mighty

intellect to bear upon the struggle. And now he grasps it—now the colossal enemy is overthrown, and as the words flow smoother and faster from his lips, as sentence after sentence pours itself forth, clearer, and more comprehensive, and more concise, the whole countenance changes as changes the aspect of a winter's day when the sun breaks forth; flashes of intelligence beam from those deep-set falcon eyes, and light up the stern, sallow face. Rapid and impressive action succeeds the slow awkwardness of his habitual movements; the slight form seems to dilate and tower into dignity, as of one born to command, and the whole man is changed, by the mere influence of mind over matter, into a sage and a hero for the occasion.

But the inspiration passes as quickly as it comes. The knot is now unravelled, the difficulty is solved. He has seen his own way to surmount it, and, more than that, has explained it to the inferior intellect of his friend, and he relapses once more into the ordinary mortal, while an expression of deep weariness and melancholy settles again upon his features, as of one who is harassed and distracted with the disappointments and heartburnings of life; who would fain cast away shield and sword, and turn aside out of the battle, and lie down and be at rest.

Yet was it not always so with this young and gifted nobleman. His youth seemed to give promise of a brighter future than is often accorded to mortal man. Bred in his father's vice-regal court of Ireland, he enjoyed opportunities of learning and cultivation which were not thrown away upon such a mental

organization as his. At eighteen years of age he was skilled beyond his fellows in all the exercises and accomplishments of the day. He was perfected in the Latin and French languages, and had already shown that energy and perseverance in the acquisition of knowledge which formed so distinguishing a characteristic of his after-life. Added to this, he inherited already an ample fortune, independent of his father—no contemptible advantage at an age when all the generous and liberal feelings are still unwarped and unstifled by the sordid cares of life. He was thus relieved from the many anxieties consequent upon inadequate means which are too apt to embitter the sparkling cup of youth, and had the more leisure to devote himself to those studies in which he took such delight. Firm and resolute to the verge of obstinacy when a point was to be gained, it is related of him that, wishing to obtain a thorough knowledge of Greek, he absented himself rigidly from London until he had acquired an intimate familiarity with that language, nor could all the persuasions of his friends, nor the intellectual temptations of the capital, induce him to forego the determination on which he had once entered. The same disposition prompted him to marry an amiable and excellent young lady, in defiance of the wishes of his family; and a generosity, by no means unnatural in such a character, induced him at the same time to offer his whole fortune for the liquidation of his father's embarrassments, he himself purposing to obtain a military appointment in Holland, and win his own livelihood and that of his family with the sword. In this scheme being

disappointed, he abandoned the career of arms, and had chalked out for himself a path of study and scholarship when the trumpet of civil war roused him from his dream of literary distinction to the absorbing realities of the strife.

He was an ardent admirer of real and constitutional liberty, and although his rigid love of justice and regard to truth commanded the respect of the Court party, as his affable demeanour and genuine kindness of heart won him the affections of all men, it was only when the throne was really threatened in its justifiable prerogatives, that he declared himself openly and unreservedly for the king. When his part was once taken, Charles had no more devoted adherent, no more judicious adviser, than Lord Falkland; but from that time, from the very date of his accepting office under the Sovereign, a change was observed in the whole temperament and demeanour of the young nobleman. He who used to be so ready of wit, so fluent in discourse, so affable towards his associates, became reserved, morose, and taciturn. His countenance wore an aspect of continual dejection; he neglected his studies, his amusements, nay, his very dress. All things became distasteful to him, save ceaseless exertion for the sake of his country. Like some classic patriot, some Roman augur to whom Fate had vouchsafed a glimpse of futurity, he mourned in anticipation for those national woes which he already hoped he might die rather than live to behold.

But even in civil war, in public distress as in private affliction, man must dine; nay, if he is one of

the porcelain vessels of the earth, and has performed since daybreak a long journey on horseback, he must also dress for dinner; and therefore Cornet Bosville, when, as in duty bound, he had delivered his despatches, betook himself to the chamber Lord Vaux's hospitality had provided for him, and with the assistance of his faithful trooper and servant, Hugh Dymocke, proceeded to the important duty of adorning his already well-favoured person.

Dymocke disapproved much of such waste of time. One led horse, to carry his own and his master's change of clothing, did not admit of his turning out the cornet in such splendour as he himself thought befitting, and were it not that he had already discovered the advantages of Lord Vaux's hospitality and the strength of his ale, he would probably have urged upon his master the necessity of proceeding on their journey directly their horses were fed and the tables drawn after the early dinner in the great hall.

'And you must wear the pearl-coloured hose, I warrant me, and the point-lace collar of which we have but one with us, and dripping wet it would be had I pushed on when you bid me, and followed that slip of quality into the river on a fool's errand,' grumbled Dymocke, as he bustled about, unpacking his master's wallets, and vainly regretting certain splendid apparel and a beautiful Toledo walking-rapier which the rebels had eased them of when Waller's horse last beat up their quarters at Tewkesbury. 'They will serve directly, and the quality will be there, rustling in brocade and satins, and what

not ; eating and drinking of the best, and the King's troops starving, and merry England going to the Puritans and the devil !' added Dymoeke, who was in his worst of humours, albeit mollified to a certain extent by recollections of the ale aforesaid.

Bosville answered nothing. He was combing out his long lovelocks, and thinking how bright were the eyes and red the lips of the lady who had scarcely looked at him during their short ride, and wishing he had dragged her instead of her companion out of the brook, and wondering whether she would observe him at dinner, and converse with him afterwards ; and reflecting, half-unconsciously, on the important fact that pearl-silken hose and a point-lace collar were no unbecoming adjuncts to the exterior of a well-looking young man.

Many years afterwards that dinner was remembered by more than one of the party. Happy Humphrey Bosville, sitting next to Mary Cave, was delighted with the share of attention she vouchsafed to bestow upon him ; was intoxicated with the radiance of her smiles, the very atmosphere of her beauty. He could not mark, nor would he have comprehended, the eager, restless glance she flashed ever and anon at the plain, reserved, dark man opposite to them, the pained expression and forced smile that overspread her countenance when she failed to attract Falkland's attention. His discourse was directed chiefly to his host and Sir Giles Allonby, and he left his lovely neighbour Grace ample leisure to observe the cornet's good looks and pleasant smiles. Three of the party at least were drinking in poison with

their canary, laying up for themselves a store of future pain in the enjoyment and fascination of the moment. It is better so: if to-day must never mortgage to-morrow, what becomes of the fee-simple of existence? If the death's-head *must* be present at all our feasts, in the name of Bacchus, hide him away under the table, there to remain till next morning at breakfast! So the party ate and drank, and laughed and talked, and the conversation turned upon the scandal of the Court and the characters of the courtiers, and that prolific theme, the enormities and vagaries of wild Lord Goring.

'A good soldier!' said Sir Giles, pledging the cornet in a bumper; 'and never loses his head, drunk or sober. You remember what he said of Wilmot's charge at Round-way-down. You were there?'

The cornet acquiesced in a modest affirmative, glad that Mary should know he had been present at that engagement, whilst Grace looked more interested in her new friend than ever.

'Rash in council,' observed Lord Vaux, still thinking of his morning's work; 'and totally unreasonable in his expectations and requirements.'

'A weak assailant,' laughed Mary; 'he scaled a convent at Bruges, and was repulsed with a broken leg, which gives him that limp you all think so charming. He should confine himself to cavalry operations. It is indeed a forlorn hope against nuns' veils and stone walls.'

'I have heard him boast he never was foiled yet by

man or woman,' said Falkland, absently fixing his dark eyes on Mary's countenance.

She blushed all over her face and neck, seemed as if she would have spoken, then turned white and held her tongue; the while Sir Giles proposed a bumper health to his old commander, gay George Goring.

CHAPTER V.

BRIDLED AND SADDLED.

WE once heard a remark drop from a pair of the sweetest lips that ever belonged to a gentle philosopher, of the truth of which we have been the more convinced the more we have watched the vagaries and eccentricities into which its victims are drawn by that affection of the brain called by the wise folly, and by fools love. 'In all cases of attachment,' said our beautiful moralist, 'depend upon it one must be always bridled and saddled, the other always booted and spurred.' Of the truth of this axiom experience has left us not the slightest doubt; but what a lesson does it convey as to the inherent selfishness of mankind, and the insufficiency of any earthly blessing to confer perfect happiness. The one that is 'bridled and saddled' has indeed 'a jade's time of it,' the one that is 'booted and spurred' uses the latter instruments ruthlessly and without remorse. Who would be the loser in the game? Who would not wish to hold the bridle and apply the spurs? And yet perhaps there may come a time when it will be unspeakable happiness to feel that we have had all the suffering and all the sorrow, proudly conscious that we have been 'bridled and saddled' all our lives, and are about to die honestly in our harness at the

end. Woe to the 'booted and spurred' one, then. When the kindly face will be seen never again but in our dreams—when the fond heart we have wrung so often is at peace for evermore—when a world's wealth and an age of longing cannot unsay the cruel word, nor recall the cold glance—when hope is dead, and even wishing a bitter mockery, how much better to sleep peacefully beneath the daisies, wearied with the strife, subdued in the defeat, than to pluck them for a remembrance which shall pass away indeed, but shall leave a blank more unendurable than the pain from which we prayed so fervently to be delivered.

A pair are walking on the terrace at Boughton in the golden flush of a fine September morning; one is 'bridled and saddled,' the other 'booted and spurred.'

Mary Cave, we need hardly observe, was a lady of no undeviating habits, no precise observer of times and seasons. Some days she would idle away the whole morning in bed, reading her letters, stitching at her embroidery, and wasting her time; on other occasions she would bustle up with the lark—and when Mary was busy, no one in the house, not even studious Lord Vaux himself could be suffered to remain quiet.

On the morning in question she was unusually wakeful, and this is the more unaccountable inasmuch as her sleep had been fitful and broken the whole night through, disturbed with dreams, and harassed with incongruous thoughts and fancies. Was she overfatigued, poor Mary! with her day's hawking, and the rapidity of Bayard's bounding movements;

or was it that hard-fought game at chess played on till nearly midnight in the withdrawing-room, with many a false move, and many a smothered sigh? Why will that image never leave her brain? The studious brow bent over the shining pieces, the slender hand clenched on the board's-edge, the long sheathed rapier meeting the point of its shadow on the polished oak floor, and the weary, weary look on that face when its eyes were raised to hers in the intricacies of the game. Why was he so weary? What was the secret reason of this overpowering melancholy, so different from the characteristic jollity of Sir Giles and the other Cavaliers? Could she ever penetrate it? Could she ever find her way deep, deep into that great, proud, inscrutable heart? Had she already done so? A thrill, keen enough to be painful, shot through her at the thought. Up and dressed, she walked to her window and looked out at the fair, calm, joyous morning, so full of hope and peace and happiness, so at variance with her own torn, restless, wayward mind! The sun was even now a hand's-breadth above the horizon; his light had already tinged the dark tops of the cedars on the opposite hill with a purple glow. Patches of the undulating park were gilded with his beams; a skein of wild-fowl, disturbed in their quiet refuge down amongst the osiers, were winging their arrowy flight, clear and distinct, against the pearly grey of the morning sky, flushing here and there into a faint pink tinge. The deer, rising to shake the dew-drops from their flanks, were still in dusky shadow, while the woodpigeon, cooing softly from the topmost branches of a fir-tree, trimmed her sleek

plumage in a flood of light from the morning sun. The fragrance of a hundred roses clustering round the basement of the old Manor House, stole in upon Mary, soothing her with associations and memories of the past. What are all the chronicles of history, all the diaries of the most inveterate journalist, to the vivid reality that a simple strain of music, the scent of the commonest wildflower, can conjure up at a moment's notice? Beneath her the smooth bowling-green, that necessary adjunct to every country-house in the olden time, stretched its shaven surface, innocent even of a daisy to mar its level uniformity, while broad terraces, with here and there a rough stone vase, and here and there a standard rose-tree, carried the eye onwards into the forest beauties, and wild irregularity of the thickly wooded park.

A spare slight figure was already traversing these terraces, pacing to and fro with swift determined strides, buried deep in thought, and plucking ever and anon a blossom or a leaf, which he crumbled nervously in his hand, and cast aside.

Mary was this morning seized with an earnest desire to tend her roses. She stepped out upon the terrace, her white robe falling in graceful folds about her shapely figure, her brown hair waving in the breeze, her rich ripe beauty glowing in the sun, her proud head thrown back with an air of enforced indifference, her whole gait and bearing stately and majestic as a queen. Yet she trembled as she approached that plain unpretending man; and her voice shook audibly as she bid him 'good-morrow,' and interrupted his solitary musings.

‘You are early, my lord,’ said Mary; ‘and equipped, I see, for a journey. Must we, then, lose our guest so soon? It is not Lord Vaux’s custom to suffer his friends to depart after one night’s lodgings; and you will scarce get leave from any of us to bid farewell at such short notice.’

Falkland was courtesy itself, and the gravest of mankind has no objection to his meditations being disturbed by a pretty woman at any hour of the day or night, so he smiled as he replied:—

‘It would need no second bidding for a tired and unwilling soldier to remain in such pleasant quarters, and least of all from you, Mistress Mary, staunchest of loyalists, and kindest and oldest of friends.’

Mary coloured with pleasure, and her eyes shone and moistened while he spoke; her every nerve thrilled to the tones of that harsh impressive voice. ‘One more day,’ she said, ‘we will only plead for one more day. There is still much to be done. I have a long correspondence to show you. There are traitors even about the Queen; and we must play another game at chess! You know I never could bear to be beaten. I must have my revenge.’

How soft and tender was her voice, how irresolute her gestures, how different her manner from that assured, self-possessed air with which she addressed every one else in the world. He could not see it; he noticed no change; he was not thinking about chess: his was the great game played on the squares that were slippery with blood.

‘It must not be, gentle Mistress Mary,’ he replied. ‘These are days in which we must all of us put our

shoulders to the wheel. Alas! it need not have been so once. You know, none better, how the ruler of the ship has failed to shift his ballast, and to trim his sails. He saw the course he felt it was his duty to steer, and he scorned to turn aside for shoal or quicksand. Yet I cannot but revere the man, be he monarch or subject, who will sacrifice his all to a principle. The die is cast now, Mistress Mary; it is too late to look back. We must throw the helve after the hatchet, and stand or fall together, one and all.'

Her eyes sparkled, though her cheek paled. It was sweet to be thus associated with him, no matter what the purpose, no matter what the result. She would stand or fall, womanlike, with her party, at all hazards; that means, she would follow Falkland, right or wrong. She said as much, and he went on, more as it seemed to himself than to her:—

'Yes; we must stand or fall now. The last appeal, which I would cheerfully have laid my head on the block to avoid, has been resorted to, and by the decision of the God of battles must we now abide. War is surely excusable if it lead to peace. Oh, Peace! Peace! I see her in my dreams, with her olive-branch and her dove-like eyes, and the skirt of her pure white robe dabbled with blood from the carnage through which she must pass. I stretch my arms to clasp her round the knees, and implore her to remain, and she vanishes, and I wake—wake to what? To see merry England devastated from sea to sea, her quiet homesteads smoking, her fertile valleys spoiled and trampled by the hoof of war. Widows and orphans appealing to my Sovereign and his advisers

to restore them their lost protectors—Thank God for my countrymen! that the worst scenes of rapine and violence are spared us—that when the fight is over, men cannot at once forget that they come of the same stock, and speak the same language. But how long is this to last? How long will it be ere some unavoidable act of cruelty leads to reprisals, and all the horrors of ancient civil war are enacted over again? What will England be then? Oh, that I for one may not live to see those times!—that I may die like a soldier under harness, and be spared a suffering worse a thousand times than such a death!

‘But these calamities will be averted,’ she exclaimed eagerly, for her heart bid her believe that Providence itself would interpose to save such a being as Falkland. ‘Another victory or two, and the Parliament must succumb. Cannot Waller be cajoled? Is not Essex wavering? Have we not the wealth and the lands, and the old blood of England, all on our side? Are we not prepared, every one of us, to die if need be in the cause?’ And she *would* have died for it willingly then and there—she would have asked nothing better than to ‘seal her testimony,’ as her Puritan enemies would have termed it, ‘with her blood,’ but it must have been with her hand in Falkland’s—with her eyes fixed on Falkland’s face. Verily, a woman’s patriotism is influenced by other than the love of country. Nevertheless, if not sincere politicians, they are unfailing partisans: and Mary was as staunch a Cavalier as ever drew a sword.

‘And therefore it is that I must away to-day before the sun is another hour higher in the sky,’ said Falk-

land, with the rare smile that illuminated his plain features into actual beauty—that found its way straight to his companion's heart. 'If our forces should be engaged; if the Parliament should be worsted, or we ourselves defeated; in either case, Mistress Mary, you would not have me absent from my post?'

'In either case,' she replied, with her voice trembling, her eyes deepening and moistening once more, 'in either case, Lord Falkland, I would be the last woman on earth to bid you stay. Ay! even if I had *the right*, the last on earth, because—because I—'

She hesitated, changed colour, and stooped to pluck a rose, which she picked to pieces, unconscious what she did; but she averted her looks from her companion, and seemed to count the tender pink petals as they fell noiselessly on the gravel path. Was he blind? was he totally insensible? was the man marble, that he could proceed so calmly and unconsciously—

'There must be no reserve; we must cast all into the treasury, and hold back nothing. It is a small thing that I give my life; there is more than life to be sacrificed—happiness and home, and all the holiest affections of a man. I leave my duties,' he spoke musingly and dreamily now; 'I leave my children—I leave my dear fond wife——'

'Hold, my lord!' interrupted Mary, with an abruptness which, though it was lost on her companion, was none the less startling to herself, that her breath came quick and her heart seemed to stop beating—

‘Hold! we have but little time before us; let us attend to the business in hand. I have letters to show you here.’ She drew a packet from her bosom as she spoke, one single missive detaching itself from the rest, and fluttering unobserved to their feet. ‘Letters from Jermyn; letters from Walter Montague, who writes like a Jesuit as he is; one from poor Marguerite, your old partner, my lord, in many a merry dance. There are traitors even in the Court, there are traitors about the Queen. We want the clear head, and the true heart, and the ready hand. Read those, Lord Falkland, and tell us all what is to be done next.’

He took the papers from her hand and perused them attentively. Again the light from within seemed to break over his whole countenance; and he returned them to her, quietly remarking, with an inquiring look, ‘There is still a link wanting in the chain, Mistress Mary. Have I seen them all?’

The fallen missive lay under the skirt of her robe. For an instant she hesitated, and moved so as completely to cover the spot where it lay, then stooped to pick it up, and blushing scarlet, placed it open in Lord Falkland’s hands.

‘One more,’ she said, ‘from Lord Goring; here it is. He always writes so foolishly; he is so wild and thoughtless. Do not think—I mean, you cannot suppose—’

Her confusion overcame her completely. He did not seem to notice it. Ere he had perused a dozen lines he gave a little start, and then his port became loftier, his manner more courteous than ever, as he

folded up the document and returned it to her, coldly observing—

‘This letter is private, Mistress Mary; and, pardon me for the remark, highly characteristic of the writer. I was not aware you knew Lord Goring so well.’

She could bear it no longer; pride, reserve, prudence, decorum—all gave way before the force of that hopeless, passionate love, sweeping in its headlong violence over every rational consideration, every earthly obstacle.

‘And you think I care for him?’ she sobbed out wildly; that profligate, that adventurer—that licentious, bold, bad man. *You* think it—that *I* care for *him*. Only say so!—only let me hear it from your own lips. *I*, who have had but one ideal ever since I was a girl—*I*, who have dared to worship the best, the noblest, the greatest of mankind.’ She had caught his hand while she spoke, covered it with kisses, and was pressing it almost fiercely against her own beating heart; ‘*I*, who have loved the very ground you trod on for your sake; who have been content to toil and scheme and suffer in the Cause, only to have a share in *your* work, a claim to *your* notice. *I*, who have loved you—yes, *loved* you, Falkland!—and I tell you so now boldly, for, come what may, I swear from henceforth never to see your face again—who have loved you for years fondly, madly, faithfully—without hope of a return. And *you* think lightly of me at the last. Oh! what will become of me; how shall I ever hold up my head again?’

She burst into tears as she spoke. She clasped his

hand with both of hers closer and closer to her heart, murmuring over it fond, broken, unintelligible words : then suddenly drawing herself up, looked him full in the face. ‘Falkland,’ she said, ‘from this hour we never meet again ; but for your sake I give myself wholly and unreservedly to the Cause—for *your* sake I devote myself to it, body and soul !’

She swept past him into the house with the stately bearing she knew so well how to assume. The proud spirit bore her up the wide staircase and through the long passages to her own chamber. If she gave way when the door was locked, and she had to wrestle it out unassisted with the one great fatality of her life, what is that to us ? ‘Verily the heart knoweth its own bitterness.’

We do not assert that from the corner of her window she did not watch him ride away on his eventful and fatal journey ; but her oath was religiously kept from that hour, for on earth she never saw Lord Falkland’s face again.

And he paced once more up and down the terrace, and thought of the beautiful woman who had so unreservedly cast herself upon his generosity, and so frankly confessed to him her wild and hopeless love. Then he remembered a fond, faithful face at home ; and a thrill of pain shot through him as he reflected how he might never see that face again. ‘Alas, alas !’ he said, almost aloud, ‘is it even so ? Is there no peace, no happiness on earth ? Must there be nothing but conflict and sorrow, and envy and strife, in public as in private. Women’s hearts sore and breaking, men grappling at each other’s throats. Peace, Peace !’

must I look for thee in vain, save in another world? Oh! I am weary of the times—God grant I may be out of them ere long!

They were soon mounted for the journey, and a gallant cavalcade they made. Lord Vaux himself, bareheaded, conducted his honoured guest to the door. Grace Allonby presented the stirrup-cup, at which good Sir Giles took a long and hearty pull. Habit is second nature after all; and in those days men belted on their swords and thrust themselves into their stout buff coats on the eve of an engagement with as few misgivings and as little ceremony as would precede a stag-hunt or a hawking match. Even Grace postponed her tears till after their departure, and accepted the ceremonious farewells of the Cavaliers; and admired the Cornet's sorrel horse, perhaps also the sorrel's rider, as if her father were not bound on a hazardous enterprise, and engaged in a sinking cause.

Ah, we may prate as we will of the *prestige* of success; we may talk of the smile of prosperity, the favouring gale of fortune. It is pleasantest, no doubt, and easiest, too, to ride a winning race; but if we want to see examples of unflinching endurance, brilliant heroism, and superhuman devotion, we must look for them amongst the partisans of a sinking cause—amongst the Bonapartists of 1814; amongst the Royalists of the Revolution; amongst the adherents of weak, chivalrous, misguided Prince Charlie, and amongst the loyal gentlemen who closed their ranks around his ill-fated ancestor, who grudged not to lavish their treasure and their blood in support

of a principle which their better sense told many of them, as it told Falkland, it was hopeless to attempt to establish.

Cornet Bosville, however, was absent and pre-occupied during all these courteous preparations for departure. To Sir Giles's pledge, which half emptied the stirrup-cup, he gave but a cold return. To Lord Vaux's hospitable entreaties that he would come back at some future time, and improve an acquaintance so auspiciously begun, he replied indeed in an eager affirmative, but left off in the middle of his sentence, and looked about him with the air of a man who is expecting something or somebody that fails to arrive. He was wondering where the bright vision of last night was hid? Why did she not appear to bid them farewell? Could she be watching them from the window of her chamber, and which was the happy window? At least these roses were likely to be her peculiar care, and the Cornet plucked one from its stem and hid it away carefully in the breast of his buff coat. And Grace saw the movement, and wondered why he did it? and blushed as she thought of one or two possible 'wherefores,' and admired the sorrel more than ever. Cross-purposes again. It is well we cannot look into one another's hearts. Would Grace have been pleased or mortified could those soft dark eyes of hers have pierced through the Cornet's buff coat, and point-lace kerchief, and Flanders linen, to read the secrets hid beneath those defences? Would the young soldier himself have been gratified had he known which was really Mary Cave's own chamber, and could he have looked through some four feet of stonework and seen

with the eyes of the flesh that lady's deep, wild, passionate distress? Why was he not up half an hour earlier, and in the garden, to overhear her conversation with Falkland, and her last long farewell? Would it have altered the whole course of his after-life, and nullified the vagaries which it is the author's province to record?—or is there no such thing as free will; and is the Cornet like his fellows, but a well-dressed puppet in the hands of destiny? Sir Giles is right, after all. He attends to the business of the moment; he returns to the stirrup-cup, which he finishes at a draught; he marshals his own and Lord Falkland's retainers in military order outside the court.

‘God bless thee, Gracey! Take care of “Diamond,”’ says the old man, in a broken whisper and with tearful eyes, to his darling; but his voice rings out manly and cheerful the next instant, as he addresses Lord Falkland—‘Everything is prepared, my lord. There is no time to be lost; may I give the word to march?’

A trumpet sounds. A small pennon, with the royal arms upon it, is hoisted by an honest English-looking yeoman. Horses snort and trample; steel and stirrup-irons ring cheerily; hats are waved and farewells exchanged once more, and the men ride off to fight and bleed, and the women remain to watch, and weep, and pray.

CHAPTER VI.

BOOTED AND SPURRED.

IN the sheds and outbuildings of an old straggling farmhouse upon the outskirts of the quiet town of Newbury, are quartered a squadron of Colepepper's regiment of horse. Chargers are stamping and snorting, and munching the long yellow straw, of which they pull out and waste at least as much as they consume. Strong well-built yeoman-looking troopers are tramping about in their heavy boots, now in the dairy, now in the kitchen, jingling their spurs, clattering their swords, grinning at their own broad jokes, and making themselves very sufficiently at home. Buxom country lasses, confused yet not altogether displeased by the number and fervency of their admirers, bustle here and there, with scarlet cheeks and laughing tones, and rustic rejoinders to the rustic gallantries of their guests. The good man of the house, one of those prudent individuals who aspire to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, being a stanch king's man for the nonee, bestirs himself to draw his strongest ale and slice his fattest bacon for the refreshment of the troops. His neighbour, a quarter of a mile off yonder, on the opposite hill, has got wild Lord Goring for a lodger, and he blesses his stars to think what an escape he has himself had of

such a visitation, and wonders whether neighbour Hodge has sent his pretty daughters out of the way.

A month or two ago he had a visit of the same description from a few of Waller's godly cavalry, and he reflects that notwithstanding their rigid discipline, long faces, and pious ejaculations, the soldiers of the Parliament were as eager to eat of the best and drink of the strongest as the noisy Cavaliers who are even now turning his house upside down. Nay, the exhortations and awakenings of the former were not confined exclusively to male converts; and black-browed, red-elbowed Joan had administered such a slap of the face to a certain proselytizing corporal as sent him down on the dairy floor with the suddenness and precision of a round-shot. Verily the man of war, under whatsoever banner he fights, is too apt to arrogate to himself the exclusive protection of Beauty; nor whatever might be the shortcomings and backslidings of the Puritan party, could the Cavaliers be held entirely blameless on this score.

Our acquaintance Dymocke, grave and ill-favoured as is his long weatherbeaten visage, scored with the lines of more than forty years, has yet a dry confident way with him that works wonders with the female sex. Let the daughters of Eve say what they will, there is no man in whom they take such an interest as a confirmed, sarcastic old bachelor. He is a riddle to be read, a rebel to be subjugated; he begins by provoking, goes on to interest, and ends perhaps by tyrannizing over them most effectually.

Joan's proselytizing admirer, notwithstanding his

cropped hair and hideous orange scarf, was a likely well-looking youth enough, yet she knocked him down without a moment's hesitation when his blandishments became too personal; but to judge by the expression of that determined young woman's physiognomy, such an argument is the last to which she would at this moment resort, even should her colloquy with sly, experienced Hugh Dymocke terminate in as hazardous an enterprise as that which discomfited the unlucky corporal.

'More eggs,' said Joan, returning from a visit to the hen-roost, with flushed cheeks and an apronful of the spoils; 'eggs and bacon and strong ale,—better fare than you and your master get at home, I warrant me, and better than you deserve, for all your smooth speeches and come-over-me ways. Get along with you, do!'

The latter ejaculation was consequent upon a practical remark made by Dymocke, with his usual gravity, but which led to no further result than a continuance of the flirtation on the part of the lady.

'Aye, it's all mighty well,' continued Joan, setting both arms akimbo, and looking boldly up at her companion; 'you tell us this, and you tell us that, and you think we're fools enough to believe every word you say. Why now, for all your impudence, you dursn't look me in the face and tell me you haven't got a sweetheart at home!'

The expression which this flattering suggestion called into Dymocke's face was a study in itself.

'Sweethearts here and sweethearts there, my bonny lass,' was the courteous reply; 'it isn't often such a

face as yours comes across us, fighting, and marching, and riding, and conquering from one end of England to the other. There's my master and the Captain as hungry as hawks: let's have the eggs and bacon frizzling on the kitchen fire this minute, and you see, if I'm alive this day week, and taken notice of maybe by the King, God bless him! what sort of a story I'll have to tell you then. Soh, my lass, gently with the frying-pan. There's a face for a wedding-favour! And with these ominous words the old soldier chucked the aforesaid face under the chin, and bore off the smoking dish in triumph for the repast of the two officers in the parlour.

Cornet Bosville sat and mused in the wide chimney-corner, careless of the noise and bustle in the yard, careless of his servant's ceaseless interruptions, careless of the comrade who occupied the same chamber, and who also seemed deeply engaged with his own thoughts, careless even of his supper, that important event in the military day. He had ridden far and fast since sunrise; he had shared in Sir Giles Allonby's careless jests, and the deep poetry of Falkland's conversation; had listened absently and with equal lack of interest to both. He had reported himself to Colepepper, and been complimented on his diligence, and favoured with the welcome news that an engagement was hourly imminent. His heart did not stir as it used to do at the intelligence. He had inspected his troop with military care and precision, nor neglected to see the good sorrel horse well fed and littered down; and now that the duties and fatigues of the day were over, he sat in the chimney-corner and drew

lines on the sanded floor with his sheathed sword, as if there were no other interest or occupation in life.

Humphrey Bosville had insensibly passed the line of demarcation which separates light-hearted youth, with its bright anticipations and merry thoughtlessness, from ardent, reflective manhood, with its deep, absorbing passions, its strong ambition, the vague aspirations, the many cares and anxieties that wait upon a beard. Hitherto life had been to him a thing exclusively of the future, now there was a past on which to dwell and ponder. He had already learned to look *back*. Alas, that sooner or later the lesson never fails to arrive! that the time *must* come when we are too surely convinced by experience that the golden distance before us is but a mirage and a delusion; that for all our discontent and unworthiness while it smiled, we have *had* our share of happiness here; and that, like Lot's wife, we cannot forbear to turn round and gaze yet once upon the city we are leaving for evermore. So we turn and look, and it strikes chill upon our hearts to think, that if we were never really contented there, how shall we be happy in the wide lonely desert stretching far away before us to meet the wide lonely sky?

Bosville's had been no uneventful life, yet hitherto he had borne his part in its stirring scenes and stormy vicissitudes with the frank carelessness of a boy at play. From his earliest youth he had been of a gentle chivalrous nature, which accorded well with his personal good looks and attractive physiognomy. As his exterior was fair and well-proportioned, adapted for proficiency in all sports and exercises, so was his dis-

position open, ardent, and imaginative, prone to throw itself enthusiastically into the present, but lacking foresight to provide for the future, or reflection to deduce counsel from the past.

He would have been a gallant knight in the olden times of chivalry, true to his God and his ladye love, ever ready to strike for the cause which he espoused, and nothing loth to oppose his single body against a host, if by such an act of self-devotion he could gain honour and renown; but he never would have been capable of assuming a leader's part in a great enterprise. He might have charged alongside of Richard Cœur de Lion, but he never would have made a counsellor for Godfrey de Bouillon. Such a nature in the times in which he lived was sure to embrace the profession that in the seventeenth century as in the nineteenth was esteemed the worthiest of gentle blood. As a matter of course he injured his patrimony, ruffling it amongst the gallants at Court; equally as a matter of course he girded his father's sword upon his thigh and took service in the Low Countries—that happy land, of which it seems to have been for centuries the privilege to afford an arena for other European nations to fight out their quarrels at their leisure.

At the siege of a small town in Flanders the company of musketeers to which he was attached had fired a few detached cottages, from which they had dislodged a superior force of the enemy. A poor little child had been left behind, overlooked in the flight of the inhabitants, and was found helpless and crying amongst the ruins of what had once been its home. The child's mother, regardless of the danger to which she was

exposed, was seen frantically waving her arms to her lost darling, and was only prevented from rushing to its rescue and her own death by a couple of stout soldiers who held her back by force. The ground between the hostile parties was swept by a withering cross-fire; Humphrey Bosville seized the child in his arms, and an old halberdier who was near him avowed that the infant ceased crying at once when soothed by that kind face and gentle voice. Coolly, steadily, as if on parade, with measured step and slow, the young officer, covering the infant with his body, paced that deadly interval till he reached the ranks of the enemy, placed the babe in its mother's arms, first kissing the child's wet cheek, and then, with a courteous bow, the hand of the grateful woman. At the same pace, with the same bearing, he rejoined his own men, unscathed and unmolested. The enemy did not even strive to take him prisoner, but the rough soldiers who saw the deed, friends and foes, gave him a cheer that rose above the rattle of musketry and the thunder of great guns. The action was characteristic of the man. He was brave, generous, and devoted, but there was too much of the woman in his heart. Such a nature is formed to be imposed upon, to be the tool and the cat's-paw of longer heads and less sensitive feelings, above all, to be made a fool of by that sex which is proverbially addicted to 'ride the willing horse too hard.'

His meditations were interrupted by the entrance of Dymocke bearing the repast which it had cost him such an expenditure of gallantry to obtain, and which he now placed upon the table between the two officers

with an expression of fatherly care and satisfaction on his lean long visage which seemed to say as plainly as words themselves, 'What would become of my master—what would become of his friends—of Colepepper's Brigade—of the army—of the King himself—without the experience and forethought of sage Hugh Dymocke?'

Breaking from a profound fit of abstraction, and drawing his chair to the table, Bosville's comrade proceeded to attack Joan's triumph of culinary skill with all the energy of a practical campaigner. Nor did the Cornet himself, however engrossing may have been the subject of his previous meditations, seem to have lost the appetite which seldom forsakes a soldier living, as the Cavaliers too often did, at free quarters. While the eggs and bacon are rapidly disappearing under the combined trituration of two very handsome sets of white serviceable teeth, and the large brown jug of strong ale is visibly approaching the ebb, we must take leave to introduce to our readers a gentleman of good birth and station, bearing the name of George Effingham, and holding rank as a Captain of Horse in the Royal army.

Cool, brave, and resolute, Effingham had done good service on more than one occasion, when the general laxity of discipline and multiplicity of commanders were creating disorder in the ranks of the Cavaliers. He possessed the rare faculty of retaining his presence of mind and imperturbability of demeanour when all around him were eager, excited, and confused. Nor did personal responsibility seem to affect his nerves one whit more than imminent danger. Such qualities are invaluable to an officer,

and Colepepper's favourite captain might have become one of the most distinguished commanders in the Royal army. But Effingham's heart was never thoroughly in the cause. Essentially an enthusiast, one of that class whom persecution too surely develops into fanatics, he was continually reasoning in his own mind on the justice of the quarrel in which he had engaged. His tendency to fatalism bade him argue that the constant reverses sustained by the Royal troops were so many additional proofs that they were warring against the will of Heaven; and the same misfortunes which endeared the cause all the more to Bosville's generous nature, shook Effingham's fidelity and destroyed his confidence in its justice.

His early life had been spent in study for the law, a profession for which his acute penetrating intellect seemed especially to fit him; but a physiognomist would have detected in the glitter of his dark deep-set eyes somewhat more of wild imaginative powers than is essential to the drawing of deeds or engrossing of parchments, whilst the firm strong jaw, the well set-on head, and bold bearing were more in character with the buff-coat than the judge's gown,—with the tramp of horses, the ringing of shots, and the wild alarms of a skirmish, than the hushed murmurs of a court or the somnolent dignity of the bench.

He is very dark, almost swarthy, with features of classical regularity, and a stern fierce expression on his countenance, as of one whom no consideration would turn aside from the path which he had once

resolved to follow. A child looking into that set dark face would burst out crying; his frame is large, square, and powerful, his very hand, white and well-shaped though it is, shows a giant's energy and a giant's grasp. Perhaps of all his comrades he likes Humphrey Bosville the best. Their characters are so antagonistic. With the exception of personal courage, they have not one quality in common. Their ideas are so different; there is such trusting kindness about the one, such harsh defiance in the other, that they cannot but be friends. Woe to the man, though, that crosses George Effingham's path—friend or foe, brother by blood or brother in arms, down he must go, without hesitation and without remorse! He would not turn aside a hand's breadth to avoid trampling down a wounded man in the battle; he would not swerve an inch from his purpose to spare the mother that bore him in the career of life.

‘So Essex is marching parallel with our main body,’ said the Cornet, setting down the ale-jug with a deep sigh after a hearty pull at its contents. ‘Now is the time to bring him to an action, and come down with our cavalry upon his flank. Byron has brought his horse up fresh and ready for work. Our own brigade has rested for thirty-six hours, and will come out tomorrow like young eagles. The enemy must be weary and harassed; now or never is our opportunity. We shall not get such another chance of winning laurels in a hurry. Zounds, Effingham, we ought to gather them by handful this time!’

‘And we shall lose it,’ was the reply; ‘lose it, as

we have lost every opportunity of terminating the struggle at a stroke; lose it, and hold up our hands and bless ourselves, and call a council of war, and say, "Who'd have thought it?" Humphrey, Providence is against us; we are fighting with invisible foes—with carelessness, supineness, immorality; we are "kicking against the pricks." Laurels, forsooth! what are laurels after all?—weeds, rubbish, refuse, dear to the unawakened heart! And you, young one, what have you to do with laurels? I never heard you talk so before.'

It was true enough. The spark of ambition had, indeed, lain dormant hitherto in Bosville's breast. His daily pay (when he could get it), his nightly quarters, his troop, his duty, his horses, and his arms, had till now been all-sufficient for his wants and interests; this craving after laurels was something new and morbid—a fancy from without, so thought Effingham—not an impulse from within. He said as much.

'You have found somebody to give them to,' continued he, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder, and looking kindly into his face. 'Poor boy, poor boy! I thought you were safe. All alike in the Royal army—all fools together, Humphrey. Listen, lad. I dreamed a dream last night. I pray that my dream come not over true! I dreamed that we broke Waller's column, and were putting them man by man to the sword, when my horse fell, the old black horse, and the charge swept over me, and I rose to my feet light and unencumbered in an instant, and there lay George Effingham on his back amongst

the hoof-prints, with his black-muzzled face deadly pale, and his sword in his hand, and his heavy horseman's boots on, and a small round spot on his forehead, as dead as Julius Cæsar, and I stood by him and cared not that he had ever belonged to me. Then a headless figure in a courtier's dress, with a courtier's rapier and ruffles and bravery, came and placed its thin white hand in mine, and a voice asked me tidings of the wife and children it had left, and the cause it had too warmly espoused, and the master who had betrayed it, and I answered it as I would answer you, "Widows and orphans; a failing cause, and a doomed King." Then we were in London, for I could not release myself from the grasp of that thin white hand, and perforce I followed where it led, and we paused at the Tower Stairs, and the river was running red with blood, so we took boat and ascended to Whitehall, and the river was red with blood there too, and the thin white hand grasped mine so painfully that I woke. Read me my dream, Humphrey Bosville; expound to me my vision, and I will confess that there is wit even below the buff-coat and embroidered belt of an officer of the Royal army.'

'I can read no dreams,' answered Humphrey, his face kindling and his eyes sparkling; 'but come what may, if all the rivers in broad England must run red with the blood of the Cavaliers, if I alone am left and they lead me out to the slaughter, as long as they don't bind my hands I will fling my hat in the air before every canting Roundhead of them all, and shout with my last gasp, "God and the King."'

A melancholy, pitying smile stole slowly over

Effingham's countenance. A kindly glance, painfully at variance with his stern harsh expression, shone out from his deep eyes. Again he laid his hand upon Bosville's shoulder, and leading him to the open window, bade him look forth and listen.

The night was already dark, save for the glimmer of a few stars faintly twinkling in the solemn sky. All nature was hushed in peace and repose, but from Goring's head-quarters, on the opposite hill, the night-breeze bore the sounds of wassail and revelry, the stamping of feet, the jingling of vessels: all the riotous sounds of an orgie, with a loyal chorus shouted out at intervals in no inharmonious tones.

'And these are the men,' said George Effingham, 'with whom we are content to cast in our lot—with whom you and I must perforce be content to triumph, and content to die!'

CHAPTER VII.

THE REVELLERS.

‘**H**OLD, Goring! Twenty gold pieces—fifty, if you will! ’tis an even main and chance. I set the easter!’

The speaker was a boy of some eighteen summers, tall and graceful, beautiful as Absalom, and, in his present frame of mind, reckless as Lucifer; his eyes shining, and his face pale with wine, his long silken love-locks floating disordered over his point-lace collar and embroidered doublet, his belts and apparel all awry, a goblet of canary in his hand, and on his face the wild joyous gleam of a spirit that has never known misfortune or reverse. Goring smiled pleasantly—winning or losing he could always smile pleasantly—could betray a woman or run a man through the body with the same good-humoured expression on his handsome dissolute face.

‘Slife, Frank,’ said he; ‘you’ve the devil’s luck and your own too. We can’t hold our way with the young ones, can we, Sir Giles? Nevertheless, fifty, my boy, if you will; just to oblige you this once.’

In a hand white and soft as a lady’s, he shook the box aloft, and the imprisoned cubes leaped out to mulct the young *roué* of fifty gold pieces for the benefit of the old one. The boy laughed, and drained his

glass to the dregs. What cared he for fifty gold pieces, with the inheritance before him—the golden inheritance of hope, that seems so inexhaustible at eighteen?

‘Once more!’ he shouted, flinging a heavy purse upon the table; ‘one more set, Goring, and then for another smoking bowl, and another roaring chorus that shall rouse the crop-eared knaves in their leaguer out yonder on the hill; and bring them down by daybreak on the nest of hornets we have got ready for them at Newbury.’

‘Softly, my lad,’ interrupted Sir Giles Allonby, laying his heavy hand on the purse, which Goring seemed already to look at as his own, ‘you’ve had gambling and drink enough for one night; you’ll have a bellyful of fighting to-morrow, or I’m mistaken. Take an old soldier’s advice; turn in with your boots on all ready for the *reveille*. Get a few hours’ sleep, and so be up and alive to-morrow morning at daybreak. I was young myself once, lad, but I never could keep the bowl trundling all the game through as you do; I never could burn the candle at both ends, and ride all day with Wilmot, to rest myself by drinking all night with Goring.’

‘Trust him to be snug and sober at this very minute,’ said the latter worthy, between whom and Wilmot, rivals in ambition, dissipation, gallantry, and war, there was a smothered grudge of many years’ standing. ‘Wilmot’s fighting, and drinking, and lovemaking, must all be done by the square. Why, he never could fly a hawk in the morning if he had heard the chimes ring never so softly over-night.’

‘Give the devil his due, Goring,’ observed Colepepper, a grim old officer, with a scar on his cheek that lent a sardonic expression to his whole countenance, and an inexhaustible power of absorption, such as the handsome lad at his elbow had got drunk in trying to emulate. ‘I’ve seen him fight as well as here and there one. *You* haven’t forgotten Roundway Down; and as for drinking—when Wilmot really turns his attention to drinking, he is a better man by two bottles of sack than any one here at this table.’

‘Granted,’ said Goring, in perfect good-humour, and still fingering the dice-box, as if loth to lose the chance of another cast. ‘All I maintain is, he can’t do both. Give him two days of leisure to sleep it off, and he’ll empty a hogshead; put him in a corner where he can’t run away, and he’ll fight like a devil incarnate.’

‘Run away is a debateable expression, my lord,’ said one of the guests with a grave tone, that at once silenced the clamour and attracted the attention of the rest of the party. ‘The phrase, as applied to my friend, smacks somewhat of offence. I take leave to ask your lordship what you mean?’

‘I mean what I say,’ answered Goring, still assuming his pleasant smile, though it deepened and hardened somewhat about the lines of his mouth. ‘I always mean what I say, and say what I mean.’

Goring was one of those gentlemen who opine that there is no dishonour so long as the sword is ready to maintain that which the lips have spoken, and that a slander or a falsehood can only affect the character of the man who utters it when he is not prepared to

vindicate it by shedding of blood. It is an ignoble creed, truly, and an unchristian-like, yet on its basis are founded many of those sentiments which we so falsely term the essence of chivalry.

‘Hold, gentlemen,’ said Sir Giles, ‘remember our compact when we sat down. Goring only means that Wilmot is a practised tactician. You think so yourself, my Lord Byron: is it not so?’

Goring was the most placable of men when nothing was to be gained by animosity. He stretched his hand to Byron—‘I said he’d fight like a devil, Byron, and I meant it, when he can’t run away; and how *can* he run away, surrounded, as he takes care to be, by a guard of honour of “Byron’s Blacks?”’ ‘Faith, I doubt if your fellows have ever been taught how to go to the rear.’

‘Enough said, my lord,’ answered Byron, completely appeased by the compliment, and wringing Goring’s hand with a hearty squeeze, whilst the handsome face hereditary in his family shone with an expression of gratified vanity. ‘The Blacks are ready for work at any time; another bowl to our “Next merry meeting with the Roundheads.” What say ye, gentlemen, we haven’t drunk the King’s health yet?’

‘Another bowl, by all means,’ shouted the young Cavalier, already half-sobered at the prospect of more revelry; ‘and Byron shall superintend the making of it, and we’ll have our host’s pretty daughters in to dance a measure, and one of the Black trumpeters to play us a *couranto*. Hurrah!’

Lord Francis was indeed burning the candle at

both ends, and seemed as determined to make the most of his life as though he could have foreseen how short would be its term; as though he could have looked into the future scarce one brief lustre, and beheld a dismounted nobleman selling his life dearly at Kingston-upon-Thames; brought to bay by some dozen Roundhead troopers, with his back against a tree, striking fiercely and manfully at them all, scouting the bare notion of surrender; dying gallantly, hopelessly, and devotedly for the King; a true Villiers, 'prodigal of his person' to the last.

'The pretty daughters are gone to bed,' said Goring, whom the immediate prospect of an engagement with the enemy had placed in an unusually amiable frame of mind, and whom a residence of twenty-four hours in the farm had made completely familiar with the intricacies of the establishment and the habits of the inmates. 'It is hardly worth while to disturb their beauty-sleep for such a performance as you propose. Let us fling a couple more mains, Frank, while the bowl is getting ready. You ought to have your revenge.'

Lord Francis seized the dice-box, nothing loth, and whilst the two are occupied in the strangely fascinating alternations of hope and fear which render gambling so attractive a pastime, it is worth while to examine the person and attributes of that distinguished officer of whom so many stories were afloat; whose devotion to the King was more than suspected, yet who did such good service in his cause; whose character for consistency was so often impugned,

yet who never failed to carry out any measure on which he had thoroughly determined; whose general life and habits were esteemed so profligate, and yet who commanded the confidence of his master—a royal example of propriety—and the obedience of his officers, of whom perhaps it would be unjust to make the same assertion. A man, in short, whose every quality, good or bad, had been called in question, save his courage, and a greater portion of whose life had been devoted to establishing the converse of the proposition which states that ‘faint heart never won fair lady;’ although, in justice to Mary Cave, we think it right to insist that, much as she may have appreciated his admiration, and freely as she returned him compliment for compliment, and gallantry for gallantry, she had never for an instant bowed her haughty head or turned her wilful heart towards wild George Goring.

As he sits now, the gayest of that gay party, the stanchest reveller amongst all those hard-fighting, hard-drinking Cavaliers, thirstier than old Colepepper, more thoughtless than young Lord Francis Villiers, who would suppose that handsome well-combed head to contain a mass of intrigues and state-secrets of which the simplest and least guilty might bring it incontinently to the block? Who would believe that kindly smile to mask a nature that never knew pity nor remorse; that never had the generosity to forgive an injury, nor to forego an advantage; that never spared a woman who trusted it, nor a man who crossed its path? Already verging on middle age, he looks bright and fresh and debonair as the youth

whose money he is rapidly winning with that easy smile. It requires a keen observer to detect in the little wrinkles about the eyes, the deep hard lines around the mouth, years spent in dissipation and indulgence, years of reckless profligacy and fierce excitement and bold defiant crime. He is beautiful still, in all the prime of man's beauty, with his noble head and his white smooth brow, and his soft eyes, and the long curls of dark silken hair that fall like a woman's round his oval face. He is beautiful in his manly, vigorous figure, on which his rich uniform sits so becomingly, which is formed alike for strength, activity, and grace, despite the limp habitual to its gait, —a limp which, as some of his fair admirers think, does but add to the distinguished ease of his bearing, and the origin of which is a mystery whereof a thousand rumours are afloat. He is beautiful still, but it is the beauty of the tiger or the panther; the outward beauty that strikes upon the eye and commands the admiration of the vulgar, that seldom wins a heart worth the winning, and if it does, too surely breaks it, and flings it scornfully away.

There he sits, keenly intent upon the game, yet noting every jest that passes, joining in every laugh that rises amongst his guests, sipping his wine at intervals, and bowing courteously to the young nobleman whose gold he wins with such graceful ease. Goring is the Mentor to whom has been entrusted this young Telemachus, and these are the Circean draughts of pleasure in which he would initiate his mother's son, were it to conduce in the remotest degree to his own advantage. He is playing the

great stake himself; he has a high command, a proud position. Any day may make or mar him, may raise him to the pinnacle of ambition, or leave his saddle empty, and his title gone to the next-of-kin. Has he not enough to risk? enough to interest him? Can he not leave untouched that half-fledged ruffler of the game? No! there are a few broad pieces still left at the bottom of the purse, and he must have them all!

‘One more glass of canary,’ says the tempter, filling his antagonist a bumper with his own white hand. ‘One more main, Frank, my lad, just to give you a chance; and then for the fresh bowl of punch, boys, and a rousing health to the King! Who knows where we shall be this time to-morrow?’

The glass was emptied. The main was called, and flung; the purse was emptied; and Goring, with a careless smile, swept the young man’s last Jacobus from the board. He was quite cool and sober; he had no excitement in the game, felt no devil roused in him by the debauch. He was simply in his natural element, in the atmosphere of vice which was most suitable to his temperament and his constitution. To rob a friend of his money, to cajole him of his mistress, to finesse him out of his life should he presume to make objections—such were merely ‘the customs of society,’ ‘the ways of the world;’ they suited one like Goring admirably—the game was adapted to his style of play, and he generally rose a winner. What could be better? He would be the last to wish the rules altered.

God help us all! And yet this man was once a

laughing, frank-hearted child—once clasped his little hands and said his prayers at his mother's knee!

The scene was worthy of the actors. A long low room, with a stone floor, and a wide chimney in which sparkled and smouldered the embers of a wood fire, a few rough deal forms, over which the heavily-booted Cavaliers straddled and lounged in every variety of attitude; a wide high-backed, carved-oak chair, the farmer's especial throne, in which was established the giver of the feast; a coarse rickety table, on which clattered and jingled every description of drinking-vessel, from the deep stone jugs and black jacks of the farm itself, to the tall gilt goblets and massive silver flagons, richly chased and burnished, which formed the moveable canteen, perhaps the spoils, of the Royal officers, and which had as yet escaped the melting-pot, sooner or later the destiny of such convertible valuables. All this seen through clouds of tobacco-smoke, for the Virginian weed was even then in universal use, although it must be confessed but as the handmaid of debauchery, whereas she is now the domestic companion and consoler of many an honest man's hearth. Amidst her floating vapours could be discerned the graceful figures of the Cavaliers, manly and soldierlike, wearing one and all the nameless stamp of high birth and refinement of manners conspicuous even in the licence of a camp and the freedom of a drinking-bout. Here sat chivalrous Byron, with a calm contented smile smoothing his well-cut features, somewhat flushed with wine. His thoughts were of the pleasantest—of his stanch, well mounted troopers—of his new peerage,

so lately won by the sword—of the dream of ambition opening so auspiciously on the daring soldier and devoted Loyalist. There reclined old Colepepper, with his scarred cheek and grim war-worn face, his elbows resting on the table, his spurs jingling against each other as he mused on cavalry tactics, and supplies of food and forage, and the remounts preparing in Yorkshire and the horse-breeding counties for his brigade—dry topics, which he took care to moisten with repeated applications to the goblet at his hand.

There was Sunderland, the young and gentle volunteer, attached as aide-de-camp to the King himself, and who, coming to Goring with despatches, had been prevailed upon to remain and partake of his hospitality. There was Carnarvon, the jovial kindly-hearted gentleman, the ornament and delight of the Court, the finest horseman, the best hawker, the keenest sportsman of his day, the adept at all manly exercises, the lancer, the swordsman, the racket-player, the traveller in strange countries, who had breathed himself with the most skilful fencers of France, had flung the jereed in 'Old Castile,' had smoked his chibouque with the Grand Turk at Stamboul, listening with breathless attention to his neighbour, Sir Giles Allonby, whose thoughts and whose discourse, far from the present scene of revelry, were resting on merry pastures and blue cloudless skies, and hawk and heron, and hood and jesses, and all the delights of the noble science of falconry.

'So the match shall be made, good my lord,' said Sir Giles, as sober as a judge, notwithstanding his potations, and prepared as usual to back 'Diamond'

against all and everything on the wing. 'The match shall be made for fifty gold pieces a-side ; and I pray you to my kinsman's poor house of Boughton, where we will entertain you to the utmost of our humble means, and I will show you such a flight as shall delight your eyes in the pastures of his Majesty's royal domain at Holmby, where I have had licence to fly my hawks since the days of his father, God bless him and sain him ! for a discreet sovereign, and as good a sportsman as ever sat, albeit somewhat inseurely, in a saddle.'

The subject was sure to interest Carnarvon, passionately attached as he was to all field-sports. 'I have heard that gentle King Jamie loved a good horse well,' he replied, 'but I always believed he piqued himself most upon his skill in the chase, and his knowledge of all the secrets and science of the noble art of venery.'

'Horse and hound, hawk and horn, nothing came amiss to King Jamie,' was Sir Giles's answer. 'He could follow a buck, and take a buck, and carve a buck, aye, and eat a fair portion of a buck, provided it were washed down with a huge allowance of canary or a tubful of claret. Oh ! the times that I have seen at Holmby, my lord, when the King came down to hunt the stag over the Haddon moorlands ; and we rode all day, gingerly enough, for it was not to be thought of that we should outstrip his Majesty ; and caution, between you and me, my lord, was a chief ingredient in his royal character. He had it for his whole family, I think ; but then we made up for it by drinking like Dutchmen at night. None of your grand entertain-

ments such as delighted his ancestors; none of your boars'-heads, and peacocks dressed in feathers, and such dishes of state; but a recking haggis—by St. George a villanous compound!—and a capon or so, with a few confections; but washed down, mark me! by wine such as you never drink now-a-days. I sometimes think the Parliament has spoiled the liquor, as they spoil everything else. And then for company, myself and poor Archie Armstrong, and two or three hard-headed Scots lords, to whom nothing came amiss. You have been in many countries, Carnarvon, and drunk with men of many nations; can you tell me why a Scotchman, who is a native of a cold climate, is always so confoundedly thirsty? But the King's delight was in what he called a "cozy bit crack" with a few kindred spirits, unawed by his son, whom he respected, or the favourite, whom he feared; who could drink, for that matter, like a fish, as all his family can, witness this boy here, who will have old Colepepper down under the table now before he has done with him! But to return to the nights at Holmby. I have seen Archie Armstrong so drunk that he could not sit upon his horse to go out hunting in the morning, and once he tumbled out of his saddle into the Nene, and when we set him up by the heels to dry, with the water running out of his boots into his neckerchief, and the King rode laughing fit to split his sides, and asked him, "How is it with thee, gossip? Methinks at last thou hast liquor more than enough!" he replied, sawing the air with his hand, as if deprecating all further hospitality, "Enough, gossip! I thank thee. Enough! I'm for nae mair this bout—neither

hot nor cold!" The King laughed that you might have heard him at Northampton; and, 'faith, Archie was a ridiculous figure as you should wish to see. But here comes the punch; so now for one rousing health, and "Confusion to the Roundheads!" After that, we have no more to-night, gentlemen, neither hot nor cold!

As Sir Giles spoke, neighbour Hodge entered the room, bearing aloft in person a huge bowl of the steaming compound, which was greeted with a shout of welcome by the Cavaliers, and soon went the way of its predecessors, amidst boisterous laughter, strange oaths, clapping of hands, stamping of feet, snatches of many a wild ranting chorus, and all the discordant jubilee of a debauch.

And yet many an anxious heart far away was aching for these revellers; many a little child had been taught to pray that very night for their welfare; many a fond lonely woman was weeping and watching even then, picturing to herself the beloved one, not flushed and swollen with wine, but calm and hushed in peaceful sleep; and many a one there present ere the same hour to-morrow would be down, stiff and stark, with a white rigid face turned upwards to the stars of Heaven.

Falkland, too, heard the dying shouts which concluded the nightly festivities of his comrades. He, too, had been awake and astir, but his vigils had been like those of some ancient knight who shrives himself and guards his armour ere the dawn of his great enterprise.

He had watched and prayed and pondered, long and

earnestly, looking intently at one bright star shining conspicuously amidst the glittering diadem that crowned the sweet autumn night. He was purifying himself for the struggle, arming for the fight,—preparing his spirit unconsciously for the great unknown.

And one at Boughton was gazing fixedly at the same star, and praying her heart out, womanlike—not for herself, but for *him*.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEWBURY.

‘**H**OW much longer are we to stand here idle, mowed down by round shot and exposed to the fire of those crop-eared citizens?’ exclaimed Bosville, as the sorrel pawed impatiently and shook his bridle, whilst the men of his squadron murmured audibly behind him at an enforced inactivity, always so trying to the undisciplined troops of the Cavaliers.

‘Steady, men,’ was George Effingham’s reply, as he confronted his little band, carelessly turning his back to the sharp fire poured in upon them by the Parliamentary artillery, admirably served, and in a commanding position, from which they had got the range of their enemy to a nicety. ‘Steady for a few minutes longer. *Our* time will come directly. I never knew Prince Rupert keep us so well in hand as he has done to-day. “He laughs best who laughs last,” Humphrey; and the game is none the worse for being played according to rule. See the pikes are deploying into line even now, and here comes Sunderland at a gallop with orders.’ Effingham’s eyes were beginning to glitter, and his dark face to pale a shade or two, as was customary with him when the moment of action had arrived.

They had waited for it long enough. The day was

already beginning to wane, and Colepepper's Horse, with a strong support of 'Byron's Blacks,' had been held in reserve so carefully, that they almost feared they were destined to have no share in the stern conflict which they could themselves behold waged by their comrades with the Parliamentary army.

Essex had taken up a strong position on an eminence called Bigg's Hill, disposing his troops in stationary masses as though unwilling to assume the offensive, and trusting to the well-known imprudence of the Cavaliers to attack him on ground most disadvantageous to their principal arm—a fiery and impetuous cavalry. The King's troops, on the contrary, had it at their own option to give or decline battle; and their obvious tactics would have been to draw the enemy, if possible, from his stronghold, and whilst manœuvring on the plain, to fall upon him with their cavalry. The older officers saw this at a glance, and Goring, smart and debonair as though turned out for a review, detached Sir Giles Allonby with a handful of veterans whom he could trust, to make a feint, followed by such a retreat as should tempt the Parliamentary leaders into a general advance of their whole line.

The old knight acquitted himself admirably of his duty. But, alas! the manœuvre succeeded only too well. The Roundheads detached a party of veteran horse to check him. A strong body of foot advanced to the assistance of their comrades. One or two headstrong young Cavalier officers, without waiting for orders, engaged the cavalry regiments they commanded. Prince Rupert, never sufficiently Fabian in his tactics, was nothing loth to offer the main body

of his horse, and was soon to be seen conspicuous in the van leading a succession of those brilliant headlong charges which have made his name proverbial as the bravest of the brave, and the rashest of the rash,—charges which *must* succeed triumphantly or fail irrevocably, and to which, in their undisciplined impetuosity, the slightest check is too apt to prove fatal. Notwithstanding their advantage of position, notwithstanding their superior discipline and numbers, the Roundhead horse gave way before the furious onslaught of the enemy; and the day must have ended in a triumph for the Royal cause had it not been for the unexpected steadiness and gallantry with which the pikemen stood their ground,—a gallantry the more surprising both to friend and foe, inasmuch as it was displayed by the hitherto untried trained bands of London, whom the Cavaliers, as was natural, held in unbounded derision and contempt, and in whom even the Parliamentary veterans had no great confidence as the champions of a doubtful day.

‘The knaves stand fast with their yard-measures in their hands,’ quoth Goring, wiping his bloody sword on his horse’s mane as he re-formed his brigade, and brought them once more into position, after leading them through and through a column of the enemy’s horse, striking fiercely to right and left, like the veriest trooper, the grim smile deepening on his countenance at every blow.

‘Those pikes will turn the tide of the action yet, my lord,’ was Sir Giles’s reply, as the experienced eye of the veteran detected the diminished ardour and failing horses of his own cavalry. ‘Zounds,’

added the old Cavalier, 'it shall never be said his Majesty's troops were turned by their own tradesmen. If they *would* but deploy into line! One more effort, and we might be amongst 'em.'

Goring laughed. 'Opportunity, you know, Sir Giles, opportunity is everything, both in love and war. The happy moment has at length arrived; and here comes Sunderland with orders.'

In effect, even as he spoke, the young Lord Sunderland rode up at a gallop, glancing eagerly at Colepepper's reserve, in which Effingham and Humphrey Bosville were deploring their inactivity. As he pulled up at Goring's side with a courteous bow, he delivered his message. 'You will form the remains of your cavalry, my lord,' he said, 'upon Colepepper's reserve, and advance with the whole up the hill. The pikes are even now deploying into line, and the Prince bids you——'

Goring was drawing his girths a hole tighter; his head was bent down to his pistol holsters, but he looked up quickly as the young Earl's voice ceased, and saw that a round shot had taken him off his horse, and that the intelligent, ardent messenger of an instant back, so full of life, and spirits, and gallantry, was now a ghastly, mutilated mass that would never speak again.

'I suppose he had nothing more to say,' observed Goring, drawing on his glove, and patting his horse carelessly on the neck, as he turned to Allonby with a calm, unmoved countenance. 'Sir Giles, form your regiment on my left. We will advance at a trot up to yonder brushwood, and there I will give the

word to charge. I think we can pay the reckoning yet.'

In the meantime the trained bands, who had already sustained the attacks of the Royalist cavalry with such determined obstinacy, and whose long pikes, held by strong English arms, and backed by stout English hearts, formed a bristling hedge of steel which not even the King's troopers could break through, were in the act of making a flank movement to acquire a position more favourable than that which they had already occupied. Prince Rupert's eagle eye, ever quick as lightning to detect an advantage, saw their wavering line, and seized the opportunity to order up his reserve for one last desperate effort. The rise of the hill was against the horses; a minute sooner and they would have been in time, but ere the cavalry could reach their steady, resolute foes, they had again become a stationary mass of resistance, hedged with steel, and pouring forth a deadly, withering fire, that enforced the Royalists to return, emptying many a saddle, and bringing many a curled head to the dust. Old Colepepper stormed and swore in vain. The most he could accomplish was to make an orderly retreat; and as Humphrey Bosville, with tears of shame and indignation in his eyes, brought his troop back in good order to their appointed position, Etlingham quietly observed, 'Another point in the game scored up against us, young one. Another opportunity lost! Laurels, indeed, Humphrey! better gather a handful of weeds, and lay your head down here on the turf, and be at rest!'

In another instant he had darted like lightning

from his men, and was engaged hand to hand with some half a dozen of the enemy's cavalry, who, like meaner birds about a hawk, were besetting the gallant Earl of Carnarvon, and hemming him in on all sides with their swords. That officer had got detached from his own men, and was now returning, alone and on a tired horse, through the scattered troopers of the enemy. Strong, athletic, and a practised swordsman, he had already emptied more than one of his opponents' saddles; but he was exhausted and outnumbered, and George Effingham's assistance came too late.

He had received a pistol-shot, which had broken his bridle arm, and deprived him of all control over his failing steed. Still, his fine horsemanship, and thorough use of his weapon enabled him to hold at bay the troopers in his front; but, alas! a sword-thrust from the rear had run him through the body; and as George Effingham cut down the successful assailant, and took the Earl's horse by the bridle to turn him out of the press, the life-blood was welling up through the rivets of his breastplate, and saturating the stout buff-coat with its frothy crimson stains. Courteous and gentle to the last, he thanked Effingham for his services.

'I am bounden to you, comrade,' he said, sinking forward on his horse's neck; 'but it is too late. I am hurt to the death, for all my cunning of fence. I pray you leave me, and save yourself.' Even as he spoke he fell heavily from his horse; and Effingham, with many a shrewd blow and many a hairbreadth 'scape, fought his way back to his own men.

Night was by this time drawing on: and as its dark mantle fell over the combatants, neither Cavaliers nor Roundheads could boast of a decided victory. The gallant trained bands bivouacked on the ground they had held with such stubborn valour; and although they made an orderly retreat at daybreak, pursuing their line of march for the capital, and regardless of the harassing attacks made on their rear by the indefatigable Prince Rupert, with a thousand musketeers and such of his cavalry as were not incapacitated by the action of the previous day, they could scarce plume themselves on having gained any positive advantage over their opponents.

Humphrey Bosville and George Effingham slept under the same cloak, the sorrel and the black picketed close to their feet. Their squadron formed a strong outpost of Prince Rupert's advancing column, and they were to be ready for the pursuit with the first dawn of the morning light. Goring returned to his quarters at the farmhouse on the hill, doubtless to receive a hospitable welcome from neighbour Hodge and his pretty daughters. Old Colepepper and Sir Giles Allonby waited on the King with their respective reports of losses and success. A few hours reconcile the survivors after an action to anything and everything that has befallen. There are rations and forage to be issued, men and horses to be accounted for, reports to be drawn up, misadventure glossed over and successes made the most of; and then, when the fatigues of the day are past, the exigencies of the morrow provided for; 'tis but another

day gone by, after all, and the conquerors and conquered lay them down,

The weary to sleep and the wounded to die.

So the trumpets sounded the *reveillé* blithely ere the first streaks of the morrow's dawn; and Effingham's squadron were up and mounted, and filing slowly over the ground of yesterday's hard-fought struggle in the early light of the soft autumn morning. Above their heads the heaven breathed of peace and beauty and holy calm; the birds were singing in the copse and hedges, the sheep bleating on the distant hill; but below their feet the very bosom of mother earth was torn and scarred by the fierce struggle of her wayward children. The ground occupied by the enemy was indeed vacant, for Essex was by this time in full and orderly retreat; but the traces of the conflict were but too apparent in broken wagons, dismounted guns, turf poached and trodden by dented hoof-marks and scored with wheel-tracks; worst of all, in helpless bodies of men and horses, lying as they fell, the dying and the dead.

Bosville shuddered as he gazed; a man must indeed be inured to war who can look unmoved on such a scene. Effingham's eye dilated as he touched his comrade's arm, and pointed to a heap of dead who had evidently made a gallant attempt to storm an orchard surrounded by an old blackthorn hedge, and been shot down man by man as they came up.

'The apples in the orchard are hanging ripe from the bough, but the harvest of death is already gathered

and carried home,' said Effingham. 'Humphrey, we are like the Assyrians when they came up by thousands against the might of Judæa, and lo! an unseen arm smote the horse and his rider. Have not these been kicking against the prieks? Verily the Lord is against us!'

'I saw them charge over this very ground yesterday,' was the young soldier's comment, 'and a nobler feat of arms I never witnessed, nor a finer fellow than the officer who led them! It was not Byron, for Byron was on the right with the rest of his Blacks, and would have turned their flank had the crafty Roundhead not placed a field-piece at the angle of the orchard. I could not recognise the officer at that distance, but I saw him put himself at the head of a handful of cavalry, and lead them twice up to this old straggling hedge, and twice they were repulsed by the deadly fire of the musketeers who lined it. The third time he leapt his horse into the orchard, and I am certain I saw him fall some twenty paces before any of his men. By St. George, there he lies!—man and horse under that large tree. Let us go in, Effingham, and see who he is!'

The two Cavaliers dismounted, and walked reverently and slowly up to the corpse. He was lying away from his dead horse, on his back. The charger had evidently fallen riddled with bullets at the same instant that his rider was struck. The corpse was stretched at length, its right hand still grasping its sword, and an ineffable expression of peace on its pale upturned face. Yes! in the midst of war he had found it at last. No more bitter misgivings now—no

more weary longing and harassing anxiety—no more aching heart and sickening hopes and fears for Falkland. There he lay, the good, the generous, the gifted; born to be the ornament of a Court, the pillar of a state, the hope of a nation; and there he lay, shot below the girdle by some obscure musketeer, himself perhaps all unconscious of the deed. Many were the good and great men that joined the Royalist cause—many a noble heart shed its blood for King Charles; many a wise head plotted for the Crown; many a stalwart arm struck its last to the war-cry of ‘God and the King;’ but there was but one Falkland, and the morning after Newbury he was found a corpse.

The tears started to Bosville’s eyes.

‘Let us send back a party to bury him,’ said he. ‘The Prince will willingly spare enough men for such a duty as this.’

Effingham was not listening to him. ‘The King had better have lost his right arm,’ was his reply. ‘Verily, the Lord is against us!’

CHAPTER IX.

'ROSA QUO LOCORUM.'

NEWS travelled but slowly in the days of which we write. It was already a week after the battle of Newbury, and the quiet party at Boughton had as yet no particulars of the fight. Rumours had indeed arrived that a great action had taken place, but as each narrator coloured his own account according to the political opinions he professed, both the details and the result remained wrapped in uncertainty. Some maintained that Essex had gained a complete victory, and was marching for London in the full tide of success, having dispersed and almost annihilated the royal army; that the King himself had fled, and that his best generals having been either killed or taken prisoners, nothing now remained but an unconditional submission to the terms of the Parliament. For this crowning merey, it was argued by those who adopted so decided a view of the case, thanksgivings ought to be rendered, and the downfall of the man Charles celebrated by a solemn festival: others, again, and these garnished their version with many strange oaths, and showed a strong disinclination to discourse upon this, or any other topic, dry-lipped, avowed that the Parliamentary army had sustained a complete and unequivocal defeat, that the Royalist cavalry had, as usual, covered themselves with glory, and his blessed

Majesty, whose health they were always prepared to drink on their knees, or indeed in any other position, having thrown a garrison into Donnington Castle, so as to command the western road to the capital, had retired in triumph to Oxford, whence he would impose the most stringent and humiliating terms on his vanquished enemies.

Grace Allonby and Mary Cave listened alternately to these conflicting statements with anxious faces and beating hearts; the former daily expecting some assurance of her father's safety, the latter vibrating between a sensation of crushing shame, as she recalled her last interview with Falkland, and all the tender misgivings of a woman for the safety of the man she loves. And yet the days dragged slowly on, in their routine of quiet occupations and homely duties. The women worked at their embroidery, and tended their roses, and rustled softly about the house, as if all were peace both within and without, as if life had no interests, no anxieties, beyond the taking up of a dropped stitch, or the nipping of a faded rosebud.

They were, however, much together; kindred hopes and fears seemed to draw closer day by day the links of friendship which had always bound these two dissimilar characters, and whilst Grace Allonby looked up to her more energetic friend for protection and consolation, the weary spirit of Mary Cave seemed to rest upon her gentle companion, and to derive a soothing, purifying influence from her sympathy and affection.

They were sitting together on a stone bench that

terminated the terrace on which Mary's last interview with Falkland had taken place. A soft, cloudy atmosphere dimmed the rays of the sun, struggling at intervals in downward sheets of light; a gentle breeze moaned through the adjacent woods, claiming here and there its first autumnal tribute in a crisp yellow leaf that floated noiselessly down to the sward. The last roses, already overblown, drooped their heads over the two women, shedding their petals thick and fast to the insidious wooer that stole so softly across the distant meadow, and over the trim lawn, to win their perfume and waste their loveliness, and kiss them and pass on. There was music in the whispering breeze, and beauty in the dying roses, but it was a sad sweet music that seemed to mourn for the past, and a beauty that spoke of disappointment and decay. Each of them gathered one of the flowers, and placed it in her bosom; each seemed to have some association connected with these autumn roses, some strangely-mingled memory of pain and pleasure, of hope and longing, and shame and sorrow, for Grace blushed scarlet, and Mary's blue eyes were filled with tears.

She brushed them hastily away, and turned her head so as to hide her face from her companion; she was ever ashamed of such womanly weaknesses, and indeed seldom gave way to her emotions, whatever might be their nature.

'Another day, Grace,' she said, 'and no news yet from the army. Oh, it wears one's heart out to sit waiting here when men are in their buff-coats and breastplates, up and armed for the King. I would I were amongst them, Grace, to take my share of dan-

ger like the rest. *C'est l'homme qui se baste, et qui conseille*; but as for us poor women, what are we good for but to clog their energies, and distract their attention, and weep and watch, and eat our own hearts in solitude?’

‘You did not always say so, Mary,’ replied her companion. ‘I thought men were the puppets, and we were to pull the strings. Have you changed your note so soon about our power and influence, and why?’

The proud look stole over Mary’s face once more. ‘Yes, Grace,’ she answered, ‘ours is the dominion, if we only knew how to keep it. It is our own fault if we lose the upper hand. It does not answer to pull the rein too tightly, and so to break it once for all; nor is it judicious to let the so-called lords of the creation discover how necessary they really are to our happiness. To do them justice, they are wonderfully obtuse on this point, and, in this single instance, strangely prone to underrate their own value. And yet, dear, I sometimes think that ours is but a tinsel royalty, after all—a fairy splendour, that is visible to the dazzled eyes of those only over whom our glamour is cast; that the real power, and wisdom, and glory is not with us, and the time may arrive at any moment when our subjects wake to find this out for themselves, and then all that was life to us is but a dream to them, a dream from which they do not even sorrow to be aroused; a dream at which they can smile when it is recalled to them, and yawn out some vague sentiment, half poetical, half philosophical, of indulgent pity on their own past folly, and self-congratulation that it is over at last for evermore. They

are not quite ashamed of it, neither do they wish it had never existed, but they talk of it (as even the best of them will of their boyhood's extravagancies) with a sort of melancholy triumph, and comical self-pity and self-sympathy. "I was very fond of that woman once," they will say, without a particle of the feeling left. The woman does not speak so, but she carries her heartache about with her in silence, and every time his name is mentioned the old wound smarts and bleeds afresh.'

'And do you believe there is no constancy?' answered Grace, in whose opinion her companion's thorough knowledge of such matters was deserving of the most implicit credence, and who felt much more alarmed than she would have been one short month ago at these discouraging views of the relations between the sexes. 'Are men all alike, and all equally heartless and variable?'

'God forbid,' was the reply; 'and yet, Grace, in all I have seen of the world, and you know that my girlhood has been passed amongst the gaieties and intrigues of a Court; well, in all I have seen, I can recall scarce one single instance of an attachment that has lasted more than two years. You look astonished, Grace, but it is so, nevertheless. They are nearly all alike, and differ only in degree from wild Lord Goring, who says that he requires a week to conquer, a week to triumph, and a week to weary, after which he allows himself a week's repose, meaning simply a rotation of hard drinking, and the beginning of the next month finds him prepared for fresh follies and fresh duplicity.'

'What a monster!' remarked Grace, lending an ear, nevertheless, with unconscious interest, to the escapades of wild George Goring.

'And yet, Grace,' proceeded Mary, looking back dreamily, as it were, into the past, 'there was once a time that even Goring was ready to sacrifice his fortunes, his ambition, his life, and indeed his all, for a woman. She was my aunt, Grace, and once I think she loved him well. It was a foolish story. He hoped to win her against all obstacles, and with his energetic nature, his courage, and his recklessness, I cannot comprehend why he failed. But so it was. During his absence abroad, where he was serving to win distinction only for her sake, others came between them, and she was lost to him for ever. It was years ago, my dear, and she is a cold, proud, stern woman now, but I think she was not always so. They say she used to be a sweet-tempered, loveable, and beautiful girl; they say she would have made Goring a good and happy wife. I have heard one person affirm that even he would have been a different man had she belonged to him; that it was not his nature always to be bad amongst the worst; that everything good and gentle in him changed in a day. But he who said so judged all men kindly, and saw everything through the clear atmosphere of his own pure, noble mind. There are few like him. But to return to Goring. I know that even after all hope was over, even at the foulest and blackest stage of his career, when my aunt was thought to be dying, he threw up his command, he returned home with a stain upon his courage, he lost his dearest chance of

distinction, to be near her; and when she recovered he was heard of wilder and wickeder than ever. There is no doubt he loved her fondly, and like a fool; and yet listen, Grace, to what I heard with my own ears. After a long absence, Lady St. Aubyn returned to Court. They had not met for years, not since I was a child, and at the time I speak of I was a grown woman, in attendance on the Queen. I was standing close to Harry Jermyn and Goring when my aunt was announced. I knew the story, and I watched the latter's face. It never altered in a muscle. I could have forgiven him if he had turned red or pale, or had even lost for an instant that hateful smile which seems to jeer at everything good and bad. No, he passed his hand through his long curls, and touched Jermyn with his elbow—"Egad, Harry," said he, "how these red and white women alter. Would you believe it, I once run my best friend through the body for a light jest about that one? And now look at her, my boy! She's an old woman, and a fat one. Faith, and almost an ugly one too. Well, it's lucky there are plenty of young ones always coming on." And this is the way men can talk of us, Grace; but not all—not all; there are a few, a very few noble hearts, that a woman might be proud to win, or failing to win, might be proud to worship in silence and lifelong pain.'

'Are there?' observed Grace, absently, for her attention was occupied by an advancing horseman, mounted on a sorrel that even at a distance she seemed to recognise. Perhaps she was thinking, 'is this one of them?' perhaps she was speculating, with the prospective power of imagination, 'will this one ever

care for *me*? and having cared, will he ever laugh, like Goring, and say, "how these women alter," and "how fat I am grown?"' The horseman was accompanied by one servant, a tall spare figure, mounted on a stout useful palfrey, the spoil of some Parliamentarian whom Dymocke had deprived of his charger by the usage of war. It was indeed Bosville who was rapidly approaching the park, and the hearts of both women beat fast, and their cheeks turned pale, for he would have news of the great battle, and the Cause, and the King, and Sir Giles Allonby, and Lord Falkland.

The young man reined up his horse at the door and dismounted, the reeking sides of the sorrel and the marks of disapprobation visible upon Dymocke's lean visage sufficiently denoting the speed at which he had been travelling. He gave the rein to his servant, and advanced to greet the ladies, with doffed beaver and slow, dejected step. His dress was disordered and travel-stained, his face bronzed by exposure, and now suffused with a deep blush, and his countenance bore a saddened expression that was ominous of bad news.

Grace jumped from her seat. 'My father!' she exclaimed, with clasped hands and eager face.

'Sir Giles is safe, Mistress Grace,' was the reply; 'he bids me commend him to you, and hopes soon to see his daughter once more.'

Grace burst into tears, and covered her face with her hands, Mary Cave meanwhile remaining pale and cold as the stone balustrade against which she leaned.

And yet she dared not ask the question that was nearest to her heart.

‘And you have obtained a victory, a great victory?’ she said, with lips that blanched and grew rigid while she spoke.

‘A victory, indeed,’ was the Cornet’s reply, ‘and a triumph for the Royal Cause. I have despatches here from the King himself to my Lord Vaux. I pray you give me leave, ladies; I must hasten to deliver them.’

‘And they are safe!’ exclaimed Grace, with her eyes full of tears; ‘all safe! those that rode away so full of life and vigour such a short time ago, and whom we thought we might never see again?’

The Cornet’s face was very grave. He needed not to speak. Ere a word had crossed his lips Mary Cave knew the worst. Is it not so with all great griefs? with all those important moments upon which turn the destinies of a life—nay, it may be of an eternity? What is it that tells the sufferer there is no hope, whole seconds if you count by the clock, whole ages if you count by the racked and tortured heart, before the decree has gone forth? Do you think the prisoner at the bar does not know the verdict before the foreman of the jury has delivered the thrilling word ‘Guilty?’ Do you think we are so constituted that by our physical organs alone we can become conscious of outward facts? Is there not in acute mental anxiety, another and independent sense of prophetic nature? Who has not suffered has not lived. Is it better to vegetate in contented ignorance, or to pluck, Eve-like, at the tree of know-

ledge, and taste the wild, bitter flavour of the fruit? Alas! the lesson of life must be learnt by one and all. Happy those who profit by it. Give them place; let them take their proper station at the head of the class; but pity the poor dunce who is smarting in his ignorance, whose hot tears are falling thick and fast upon the page.

'We have bought our victory at too high a price,' said Humphrey; 'some of the noblest heads in England lie low at Newbury. Carnarvon, Sunderland, Falkland, have met a soldier's death and found a soldier's grave.'

Mary spoke not a word. Her beautiful features took a set meaningless expression, like a mask, or like the face of a corpse. There was a dull stony look in her eye, like that of some dumb animal.

Suffering pain and nerved to endure, her head was thrown proudly back till the muscles of the neck started out in painful tension. It seemed strange to see one of her cast of beauty so metamorphosed. Unbending physical resistance and acute stupifying suffering combined, seemed so out of character with her ripe womanly loveliness, her soft undulating form, her rich brown hair. She who was formed to love, and laugh, and command with the imperious wilfulness of a spoiled child,—it was sad to see her there, with a hard defiance, even of her own breaking heart, stamped upon her brow.

She questioned Bosville again and again, unwavering and pitiless towards herself, she learned every particular he had to tell, she shrank from no incident of the action, no harrowing detail of Falkland's last

charge, or the state in which he was found; and then with quiet grave courtesy she thanked Humphrey for his narrative, and walked once more up the well-remembered stairs with the stately step and queen-like gestures that became her so well.

She had been a changed woman one short week ago, when her chamber door had closed upon her after that interview which she could never forget. She was changed again now; but it was a change that would influence her till she was at rest in her grave.

Bosville followed her with his eyes as she stepped gracefully away, but with his body he accompanied Grace Allonby into the house, that he might deliver his despatches, as in duty bound, to that young lady's kinsman. Now that the first anxious inquiries were over, that Sir Giles's safety was ascertained, and the victory of Newbury—for as a victory it was claimed by the Royalists—placed beyond a doubt, they talked, as young people will, of lighter and more mirthful matters—of the Court at Oxford, of the last jest made by Wilmot, and the last new fashion introduced by Harry Jermyn, of the Queen's caprices, and Prince Rupert's retorts uncourteous, of the thousand topics which come so readily to the lips where the deeper chords of character have not yet been sounded, and which make a dialogue between a young gentleman and lady, both of them well born and well bred, so sparkling and agreeable, that we despair of conveying its purport to the reader through the medium of our staid and sober pen.

Arrived at the threshold of Lord Vaux's own

chamber, Grace bid her companion 'Good-bye,' with a half laughing, half formal courtesy. He turned as he closed the door for another glance at his guide. Oddly enough, at that very moment Grace turned too,—it always does happen so,—and as she tripped away to decorate her person in her own chamber, she felt happy and light-hearted as a bird. Of course it was the news of the great victory at Newbury and the safety of good Sir Giles that created this wondrous change in his daughter's spirits.

Mary Cave was on her knees in the adjoining apartment. The struggle was over, the wild sickening feeling of despair alone remained, but the great agony had passed away, and a flood of tears had brought that relief to the overcharged heart and the overstrung brain which alone saves the sufferer from madness. There are some natures that are at once utterly prostrated by sorrow, that make no effort to resist it, and yield at the first attack; such know nothing of real misery. It is the proud unbending spirit that has defied a thousand storms, which falls with a crash at last.

Mary had been accustomed to conquer, had marched in triumph over the necks of a host of captives; hers was no meek yielding disposition, that clings where it attaches itself, and finds a pleasure in self-abasement and self-sacrifice. No; she was one of those wild birds that must be tamed, and subjected, and restrained, to stoop to the lure by a stronger will than their own; and she had found her master long ago. Hopeless though it was, she had fixed her love upon Falkland: though he could never be hers, there

had yet been a vague unacknowledged link that bound them together ; and now even this was broken, and he was dead. Dead ! the irrevocable, the fatal word, before which all other griefs seem so trifling, all other breaches so easily repaired, all other sorrows so open to consolation. Never, never to see him more ! It was a dull, stony, stupifying sensation. She was so glad, so thankful she had told him all before he went away. There was no shame now, no self-abasement, no womanly pride to come between her and the loved one in his cold grave ; and Mary's tears welled up afresh, thick and hot, and the band that seemed to have compressed her heart to suffocation grew looser, and she rose from her knees with a firm resolve in her brain, and a giant's strength growing up in her steadfast will to struggle and endure.

CHAPTER X.

'ANCILLÆ PUDORIS.'

GRACE ALLONBY inhabited a pretty little room overlooking the terrace we have so often mentioned, and stored with the many knick-knacks that, even in the days of which we write, were affected by young ladies to 'keep them beautiful, and leave them neat.' Albeit the act of prying into such a boudoir may be deemed an impertinence, yet must we claim the historian's privilege to be at all times in all places, and take a peep at Grace undergoing the various tortures of the toilet at the hands of her handmaid Faith, a pretty Puritan, whose duties as the *soubrette* of a Cavalier's daughter are continually at variance with her conscientious opinions—a mental conflict which imparts to that damsel's conversation and general character a degree of acidity foreign to her real nature. She is combing and brushing her lady's hair with merciless energy, and those long dark masses fall over the white neck and bosom with a luxuriance of which the maid is prouder than her mistress. Yet is she reflecting even now, while with a turn of her skilful hand she adjusts a jetty ringlet, holding the comb meanwhile between her teeth, how the crowning beauty of Absalom was a delusion and a snare; and how, though a woman may be permitted

to retain her abundant tresses, the long love-locks of the Cavaliers *must* be wicked, they are so very becoming.

‘Is the young officer from Newbury going away to-day, Mistress Grace, or doth he remain all night?’ asks Faith, with an air and accent of the utmost simplicity.

It is a strange coincidence, but Grace is thinking exactly the same thing. A shower of ringlets falls between her face and the mirror, so she blushes under them unseen; nevertheless her neck and shoulders crimson visibly, and Faith, although a Puritan, deduces her own conclusions. Like a thorough waiting-maid, however, she proceeds, without pausing for an answer—

‘He is a likely young gentleman enough; of a fair countenance, and a gallant bearing too, as becomes a soldier. He cannot be as bad as the rest of them, Mistress Grace, or he would hardly have left them by his own desire to come here to our quiet place, where he knows nobody and can care for nobody.’

‘He goes where he is ordered, Faith,’ replies Grace, very quietly, and with a certain air of enforced dignity; ‘he is a brave and good officer,’ she adds, her voice trembling a little, ‘and has been sent here with despatches by the King himself.’

‘I know what I know,’ resumes Faith, with some asperity. ‘When it came to a question of who was to leave the army, and ride alone—leastways, him and his servant—through the ranks of the rebels, that’s to say the Parliamentarians’ (Faith catches herself up rapidly as she recollects her political and religious

principles), 'facing dangers and what not, to come here to Boughton:—nothing would serve Captain Bosville—for a captain he is and will be when he gets his due, as them that knows and told me is not misinformed—nothing would serve him but down he goes on his knees before the King—I wonder he wasn't ashamed to do it; and says he, "Your Majesty," says he, "where the treasure is there will the heart be also; and my sorrel," says he—that's the one he rode here that's got two fore-shoes off now in the great stable—"my sorrel can do the distance in half the time of e'er another in your Majesty's army; and my servant," says he—that's good Master Dymocke, a worthy man and a right thinker, though backsliding for the time—"my servant knows the ways by track and ford, and none other; and we crave leave to enter upon the duty, and so to kiss your Majesty's hand, and God be with you all." And with that,' continued Faith, now almost breathless, 'they up and saddled, and never drew rein till they rode in at our great gates, and as Master Dymocke says, "faint heart never won fair lady," and "the labourer is worthy of his hire."'

Grace listens well pleased to this somewhat improbable story; drop by drop the poison is stealing gently into her veins. It is sweet to hear his name already; soon it will be sweet to talk of him even to an uninterested listener; then will come blushes and confusion, and a strange wild thrill of pleasure; and then the reckoning must be paid for happiness thus taken up at interest. The lonely hours, the weary days, the sore heart, and the wan face, that never

blushes now, but only contracts with a sickly smile and turns whiter than before. Is not this the course of ninety-nine love-tales out of a hundred? Poor fools! wasting your treasure for that which is not bread.

But Grace is busy fastening a rose into her bodice, and Faith is still training the long tresses into too bewitching curls.

‘They can’t go to-night, Mistress Grace,’ says the latter, answering her previous question for herself. ‘After such a ride as that, both man and beast are entitled to rest and refreshment, as Master Dymocke says; and moreover, there’s one of them as wouldn’t be dragged from here by wild-horses except his duty for the King required him. Poor blinded creature! I know what I know.’

‘And is it the master or the man that is so wedded to a place he has only seen twice in his life?’ asks Grace, half amused in spite of herself, although her heart is beating somewhat faster than usual. Faith is at once overcome by an access of propriety.

‘Oh, madam,’ she replies, ‘it is not for me to make free with the young gentleman’s thoughts; and as for Master Dymocke, though a worthy man and a personable, his gravity and his experience puts him beyond all such vanities. Only there’s some talk of their staying here for a convoy and a guard to take us all on to Oxford, where may we be preserved from the temptations of a Court!’ adds Faith, piously. ‘And now, madam,’ she concludes, with a finishing twist to the curls and a toss of her own head, ‘I have made a clean breast of it; I have told you all I know,

and of what may come of it, whether for good or for evil, I wash my hands.'

With which solemn admonition Faith folds up her lady's things, smoothing them into squares with unusual accuracy and precision. She is evidently waiting to be further questioned, but in this she is disappointed, for Grace Allonby is in more hurry than common to attend upon her kinsman downstairs; and it is with trembling steps and breath coming quick and short that she proceeds to the great hall, where she already hears the voices of Lord Vaux and his lately arrived guest.

Captain Bosville, as we must call him now—for Faith's information, however obtained, is perfectly correct, and his captain's commission is already made out and signed by the Sovereign—has performed an elaborate toilet, and one that even less prejudiced eyes than those of Grace Allonby would pronounce to be most becoming. His long love-locks, curled and perfumed with the greatest care, droop over a point-lace collar fitting high and close around the throat, but falling back in dazzling width over his broad shoulders. His velvet doublet, richly embroidered, and fastened down the front with tags and loops of gold, is slashed at the sleeves, so as to display the fine texture of his cambric garment underneath, and fitting tightly over the hands, admits of the broad wristbands being turned back so as to exhibit the whiteness and symmetry of those members to the greatest advantage. A ruby clasp fastens his doublet at the throat; a fellow stone, of equal size and radiance, is set in the pommel of his sword. These,

too, will ere long be converted into men and horses for King Charles; meantime they are very dazzling, very beautiful, and very useless. A wide rustling scarf, stiff with embroidery, crosses his breast, and is gathered into a huge knot over his left hip, where it meets the broad baldric that sustains his long straight sword. His lower man is clothed in loose velvet pantaloons, reaching somewhat below the knee, to meet the wide wrinkled riding-boots, pushed half-way down the leg, and forming with their high heels and heavy massive spurs a somewhat warlike termination to the festive air betrayed in the rest of his costume. Add to all this a handsome face, embrowned by exercise, and wearing the keen forcible expression which all men of action insensibly acquire, and we arrive at a general effect, which might indeed make sad havoc in a heart already predisposed to look upon it with favour and affection.

Nor was Grace Allonby thrust upon an unequal war unfurnished with those weapons, both offensive and defensive, which women know how to use so skilfully. In the days of the first Charles a lady's dress much resembled that of the present era. There was the same display of confident beauty above, the same voluminous series of defences below, as though the attack must be provoked only to be repelled. There was the same costly taste for jewellery, the same magnificence of texture and gorgeousness of hue in silks and satins—nay, the very arms, bared nearly to the elbow, were overhung by a cloudy, graceful fabric of muslin or lace, or whatever it is which suits so well with a white skin, a handsome

hand, and a rich bracelet, and which is to-day so much affected by those who are possessed of any or all of these advantages. Grace Allonby's light girlish figure borrowed a graceful dignity from the ample folds of the heavy brocade she wore—low at the bosom, and descending to a peak or stomacher, the upper part of the body was distinctly and beautifully defined; whilst the spreading skirt, falling in massive plaits from her slender waist, added that majestic sweep and volume which ladies consider so necessary to complete the finish of their costume. Her hair, undisfigured by powder, which had not yet come into use, curled in graceful clusters over her ivory forehead, and did Faith credit for the manner in which she had dressed and disposed it. The girl wore a double row of pearls tight round her neck, and pearl bracelets round her wrists. Sir Giles had not fought and foraged many a long year without obtaining some valuables to bestow upon his darling; and those very pearls were a gift from lavish and ill-judging King Jamie for a deed that had required a silent tongue, a ready hand, and a heart stouter than most men possessed. So Sir Giles was asked to choose his reward, and he chose the casket of pearls lying on the trembling monarch's table, to store them up for his little Gracey. And the King gave them frankly, and regretted them a moment afterwards; but nevertheless, before all was done, they found their way back again to the service of the Stuarts.

So Humphrey Bosville and Grace Allonby were as well-looking a couple as you shall see in a summer's-day; and we may be sure the young lady was satis-

fied with their joint appearance, and laughed and talked with a gaiety foreign to her usually reserved and quiet demeanour. The Cavalier, on the contrary, was absent and distracted; glancing uneasily at the door, and looking about him with wandering eyes, as though he missed some accustomed face: by degrees the coldness of his manner threw a damp over the rest of the party. Grace began to feel chilled and disappointed, and withdrew into herself. Lord Vaux was distressed and unhappy at the news of the late action, and the price which a victory had cost. The three sat silent and moody; and the afternoon, to which poor Grace had so looked forward during her toilet, and which had promised to be so bright and sunshiny, terminated, as such anticipated hours too often terminate, in clouds and disappointment.

But it does not follow that because there are pique and vapours in the parlour, loud laugh and broad jest and noisy conversation should be wanting in the hall. There was no lack at Boughton of nut-brown ale brewed of the strongest, with which Lord Vaux's retainers had no objection to make merry whenever occasion offered. Such an opportunity as the present could not of course be suffered to pass over without an unusual amount of wassailing, a double health to the King, and many hearty pledges to worthy Master Dymocke, who, in his capacity of ambassador extraordinary from the army, and first accredited messenger with the news of victory, received all the compliments and congratulations poured upon him as no more than his due, and replied to the pledges of his admirers with a fervent cordiality that brought an

unwonted colour to his cheek, and lustre to his eye. Not that Master Dymocke was ever known to succumb to the potent influence of John Barleycorn, or to lose the presence of mind and philosophical equanimity on which he prided himself: nothing of the kind; his was one of those phlegmatic temperaments derived from the Saxon element in our constitutions, which, partaking of the nature of a sponge, like that porous substance, become only the more dense and weighty the more liquid you pour into them. Dymocke had already pledged the steward in many a foaming horn, had emptied a beaker with the falconer in answer to that worthy's compliments and good wishes, had drunk to all the serving-men in turn, measure for measure and courtesy for courtesy, nor had shrunk from an extraordinary and overflowing bumper to the health of the King,—and still his speech was unflinching, and his head clear. Nay, more; although by general consent allowed to have all the conversation to himself,—although he had told the story of the fight in all its different versions over and over again, each time long before the conclusion becoming the hero of his own tale, he had yet resisted the temptation of *talking* himself drunk; and it was with a steady foot and a deportment more solemn than ordinary, that he rose from the hall-board to betake himself to the stable, there, like a true soldier, to look after his own and his master's steeds.

As he fed and watered them, and littered them carefully down, and patted the good animals, of which none but a sportsman, or a soldier, or a highwayman,

none but he whose life depends upon the merits of his horse, knows the real value, they seemed to be sleeker and fresher than usual, less wearied with their long journey, smoother in their coats, brighter in their eyes, and cooler in their legs, than was customary. Many healths conscientiously emptied are apt to have this effect of enhancing the good qualities of our possessions, and Dymocke, as he departed from the stable and proceeded towards the house, was in that frame of mind which sees everything in its brightest hues, and in which our weaknesses—if weaknesses we chance to have—are, as was once observed by an Irishman, at the strongest. Now, Dymocke, though an elderly man, or what he would himself have called in the prime of life, was, as we have already stated, still a bachelor, and like all other bachelors, of whatever age, an admirer of the fair. Marriage is somewhat apt to damp the woman-worship which sits so well upon the stronger sex, more's the pity! but Hugh being still unmarried, was more susceptible to the fascinations of beauty than would have been supposed by those who only contemplated his lean austere-looking face, and were not aware that, like a rough and wrinkled walnut, he was kernel all through. It was therefore with a grim smile, and a sensation entirely pleasurable, that he met the pretty Puritan Faith in the outer court, and assisted that good-looking damsel to carry a certain ponderous clothes-basket from the washing-green into the house. Ladies'-maids were not above hard work in the seventeenth century, and had not as yet arrived at the pitch of refinement now so essential to the dignity of the

second table, and so much in character with low evening dresses, white gloves, satin shoes, and short whist.

Faith, too, although a Puritan, had no objection to make the most of those personal charms with which she was blessed by nature. Though her hair was prudishly gathered beneath a little lace cap, it was sleek and glossy as the plumage of a bird. Her gown, though sad-coloured in hue, and coarse in texture, fitted her full shape with coquettish accuracy, and was pulled through the pocket-holes so as to display her bright stuff petticoat to the greatest advantage. Her trim ankles were covered by the tightest and best fitting of scarlet hose, and her high-heeled shoes protected a pair of neat little feet that many a well-born lady might have envied. She looked very nice, and Hugh Dymocke was thoroughly convinced of the fact, so it was no unpleasant reflection to remember that he was not immediately about to pursue his journey, and that the horses he had just been caring for would reap the full benefits of the comfortable stable in which they were housed. He was a grave man, and he said as much with a staid air, balancing the clothes-basket the while, and interposing his long person between the admiring damsel and her destination. Faith was nothing loth, too, for a chat; like all women, she was a hero-worshipper, and were not Bosville and his domestic heroes for the nonee? but womanlike, she of course dissembled her gratification, and assumed the offensive.

'The sooner the better, Master Dymocke,' observed this seductive damsel, pertly, in allusion to the de-

parture of her solemn admirer, which he informed her was to be postponed *sine die*. ‘Soldiers only hinder work; and I’ve got my young lady’s things to attend to, and no time to stand here gossiping with you. Not but what you’re a well-informed man, and a sober, Master ‘Dymoeke, and too good for your evil trade, which is only murder in disguise, and for your comrades, which is men of Belial, and miserable sinners, one worse than another.’

‘By your leave, good Mistress Faith,’ answered Dymoeke, ‘this is a subject I should be happy to explain to you, and one on which, with your good will, I shall enter during our journey—for you and I are to be fellow-travellers, as I understand—for our mutual improvement and advantage.’

‘Journey, good lack!’ exclaimed the waiting-maid, clasping her hands in well-feigned astonishment; ‘and where be you about to take me, Master Dymoeke, and have you the King’s authority to do what you will with us all? Forsooth, and I have a mind of my own, as you shall shortly find out!’

‘His gracious Majesty,’ replied Dymoeke, with the utmost gravity, ‘when he thought fit to despatch myself and Captain Bosville on this important duty, confided to me, through an old friend of my own, now a yeoman in his guard, that I was to take charge of the ladies of this family, doubtless accompanied by their kinsman, Lord Vaux, to his right royal Court at Oxford, where I shall make it my duty to place ye in safety and good keeping till these troublous times be overpast.’

‘And were *you* entrusted with the charge of my

young lady as well as myself, Master Dymocke?' asked Faith with extreme *naïveté*, or was there no word of the captain, your master, in these marchings and countermarchings, of which you soldiers make so little account?'

'My master's youth and inexperience in the ways of womankind would make him a bad guide without myself to counsel and assist him,' was the reply; 'but take comfort, Mistress Faith, for your lady's sake, at least. The lad is a good lad, and accompanies us to the Court.'

'And well pleased my lady will be!' burst out Faith, clapping her hands. 'And a sweet pretty couple they make as does one's heart good to see. A soldier and a soldier's daughter. Well, it's a bad trade, but "like will to like," Master Dymocke. Good lack! it is all vanity.'

'Like will to like, as you observe, and it *is* vanity,' replied Dymocke, without moving a muscle of his countenance; but the clothes-basket had got by this time set on end in the narrow passage they were just entering; and there seemed to be some difficulty, and a good deal of shuffling of feet ere Faith could get past the obstacle. When she did succeed, however, in effecting this manœuvre, she passed the back of her hand across her mouth, and set her cap to rights in a somewhat flurried manner, strongly in contrast with the staid demeanour from which Dymocke never wavered an instant. The latter was something of a herbalist, and it is probable that he had been practically impressing on her the botanical fact, 'that the gorse is in bloom the whole year round.'

CHAPTER XI.

MERTON COLLEGE.

OLD Oxford never looked more picturesque and beautiful than late on an autumnal evening of the year of Grace 1643, when its spires and towers, its stately halls and splendid colleges, formed the court of an unfortunate king, and a refuge for the flower of England's aristocracy. The western sky, a-flame with the departing glories of a gorgeous sunset, tinged with a crimson glow the domes and pinnacles of those stately edifices looming gigantic in the dim haze of evening, already creeping on. Here and there a light twinkling through the gloom shone out starlike over the porch of some lodging where the noble of a hundred manors and a score of castles was content to take up his abode, or from some window where high-born dames, flowers and ornaments of the English court, now looked down like caged birds from their aviary over the busy street below. Groups of cavaliers, warlike retainers, peaceful citizens, grave and reverend churchmen, soldiers trained to war, and soldiers armed for the first time, from loyalty or necessity, filled the town to overflowing. Scarfs and feathers waved and fluttered, spurs jingled, brocades rustled, and steel clanked in the once peaceful resort of study and the arts. The

clatter of troop-horses, the ring of the smithy, the joyous peal of the trumpet-call, and the ready chorus of reckless voices shouting some Cavalier ditty, mingled strangely with the solemn swell of an organ in a neighbouring chapel, with the toll of a death-bell from a distant cathedral tower. Stanch in her loyalty to the last, the old University town had willingly outraged all her own habits of discipline and decorum for the sake of her king, as she afterwards mortgaged her revenues and pawned her plate in the same failing cause. She was now filled to overflowing, for the Queen, accompanied by her own separate and special court, had lately joined her husband in the only refuge left to them, and still the Cavaliers were pouring in to offer their homage and their swords to the devoted monarch.

A party on horseback have just arrived, and are alighting at the door of the lodging already provided for them. They are dusty and travel-stained, as though they had come a considerable distance, and the old man, clad in a dark sober dress, who rides at their head, seems weary and ill at ease. Lord Vaux would fain rest from his labours and be allowed to stay quietly at home. Not so Grace Allonby, whom Bosville assists from her horse and places in her father's arms, for Sir Giles, safe and sound, smiling and unscathed, is waiting to receive his daughter, and thanks Humphrey for the care he has taken of her, and greets them all, including Faith and Dymocke, with his usual soldierlike cordiality. Grace is delighted with the bustle of her arrival as she has been pleased with the events of her journey. All is new

to her, and there is a varnish over everything she sees just now, which brings it out in its brightest colours. She pats the sorrel with a grateful smile as she wishes its owner good-bye. He has performed his duty, and must take his leave for his own quarters, but whilst they inhabit the same town the chances are that they will often meet again. He shakes hands with her cordially, and looks straight into her face with his honest hazel eyes; but when in turn he lifts Mary Cave off her horse, who has been riding somewhat in the rear, those eyes are averted and downcast, his colour comes and goes, and though he lingers long over the pressure of that hand offered so frankly, and would fain put it to his lips, he releases it abruptly, and walks away like a man in a dream.

Honest Dymocke, with a mysterious grin, whispers Faith; and the waiting-maid, who is convinced she has won a convert, bids him farewell with a warmth which nothing apparently but the publicity of the occasion tones down to the necessary degree of reserve and decorum. Our sedate friend has clearly made a conquest, but our business at present is with his master.

Humphrey Bosville strides absently up the street, and revolves in his own mind the events of the last few weeks, and the change that has come over him. He ruminates long and earnestly on one of the companions of his late journey. With the one-sided sharp-sightedness of love, he has totally ignored that which any other but himself must have detected, the interest he has created in the gentle heart of Grace Allonby; but he has keenly felt that in Mary Cave's

thoughts there are depths which he has never sounded, aspirations in which he has no share, regrets which he is powerless to console. She has been charming and winning in her manner towards him, as it is her nature to charm and win all mankind; she has vouchsafed both himself and the sorrel far more attention than he had any right to expect; and yet there was a something with which he was discontented—a want somewhere unfulfilled, a longing unsatisfied. It worried him—it goaded him; manlike, it made him think about her all the more.

As he strode moodily up the street a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and Effingham, paler and sterner than ever, stood before him: those wild eager eyes looked kindly as was their wont upon his comrade.

‘Welcome, young one,’ said George, in his deep stern tones; ‘welcome to the city of the plain! If ten righteous men could have averted the doom from Sodom, it may be that one honest heart can save Oxford. I have looked for it here in vain, unless you, Humphrey, have brought it with you.’

Boswell returned his greeting warmly, and questioned him eagerly as to the numbers and prospects of the Cavaliers. Effingham’s answers showed the desponding view which he at least entertained of the success of his party. ‘It is a sinking ship, Humphrey,’ said he, in a low melancholy voice, ‘and the crew are drugging themselves into apathy before they are engulfed in the waves. With every wound of our bleeding country gaping afresh, nothing is thought of here but riot and wassailing, dicing and drinking, and masking and mumming, and the

Frenchwoman dancing over the ruins of her husband's kingdom and the death of its bravest supporters, even as the daughter of Herodias danced to the destruction of John the Baptist. Oh, it is a sickening struggle, and we are fighting in a wrong cause! Day by day the conviction grows stronger in my mind; day by day I feel that I am acting against my conscience and to the loss of my own soul! Can such men as Goring and Wilmot and Lunsford be on the side of truth? Will God prosper the cause of a faithless wife, with her bevy of minions, such as Holland and Jermyn and Digby? Shall good men strive in the battle, and toil in the march, and leave home and duties and peril their lands and lives, nay, their very salvation, to be bought and sold by a painted traitress like Carlisle? Must we have two Courts, forsooth, one opposed to the other? and shall we serve both to be rewarded by neither, and give our all to a master who is himself subjected to the Jezebel of our day? Verily, "a house divided against itself shall not stand," and I am sick and weary of it, and would fain that it was over. But judge for yourself, Humphrey, by what you will see to-night. The Queen holds her accustomed reception at Merton College. You will attend, as in duty bound, to kiss her hand, after so gallantly affording a convoy to these ladies who have come to join her Court. Judge for yourself, and may God give you clear-sightedness to choose the right path.' With these words Effingham turned abruptly from his friend and strode rapidly away.

But Humphrey was torn by none of these doubts and misgivings as to the side which he had adopted

in the great struggle of the day. He was a true Cavalier, and a characteristic type of the party to which he belonged. All the enthusiasm of a chivalrous nature was enlisted on behalf of the unfortunate Monarch and of his beautiful and fascinating Queen. All the veneration which prevailed strongly in his disposition prompted him to reverence the old sentiments of loyalty in which he had been brought up, the *prestige* of a crown for which his ancestors had ever been ready to suffer and to die. What mattered it to him that Goring was a profligate and Lunsford a mercenary? The reckless prodigality of the one and the determined bravery of the other shed a halo even over their worst deeds, and he could not in his heart entirely repudiate the dashing courage so akin to his own, which checked at no obstacle and hesitated for no results. If Jermyn was an intriguer, and Holland, with his handsome face, a mass of duplicity, and Digby a most unworthy successor to the true and generous Falkland, there was a charm in their polished kindly manners, a dignity and chivalrous grace in their bearing, that forbade his youthful admiration from judging them too harshly; and even if Henrietta had sacrificed her husband's interests to her own caprices, had given him the most injudicious advice at the worst possible time, and had proved at all junctures and under all circumstances a clog round his neck and a difficulty in his path, was it for him to judge one who united the charms of a woman to the dignity of a Queen, who, with the ready tact of her nature, had already won his heart at a review of Colepepper's brigade by a judicious compliment to his

own horsemanship and the beauty of the sorrel he bestrode? Above all, was not the idol of his heart a staunch Cavalier — a partisan, ready and willing to make any and every sacrifice for the royal cause? Had not many a sentiment of loyalty dropped from her in chance conversation during their journey, and been garnered up in his heart as we garner up alone the words of those we love. They sink deeply, and we ponder on them long and earnestly. God help us! we forget them never in a lifetime.

So Mary Cave being a Cavalier, of course Humphrey Bosville was a Cavalier too (there are reasons for political as well as for other sentiments), and so it was but natural that he should don his most magnificent attire, and present himself at Merton College to pay his homage to his Queen. Sir Giles and Grace Altonby would surely be there, and it was probable that Mary, notwithstanding the deep and bitter grief under which he could not but see she was labouring, would accompany her kinsfolk to the Court.

So his heart beat quicker than it had ever done in action, when he found himself pacing through the double rank of guards, furnished in rotation by the noblemen about the Court, who lined the passages and entrance of Merton College, and we think that as he entered the crowded reception-rooms it would have been almost a relief not to have been aware, as he intuitively was, of the presence of his lady-love.

It was indeed a gay and gorgeous assemblage, and could not fail to strike even one so preoccupied as Bosville with interest and admiration. Like a diamond

set in a circlet of precious stones, Henrietta herself formed the centre of the sparkling throng, and cast her brilliance on all around, as, with the wit for which she was so remarkable, she scattered amongst her courtiers those graceful nothings which cost so little, and yet buy so much. Small in person, with fairy feet and beautifully formed hands and arms, with radiant black eyes and delicate features, it was not difficult to understand the fascination which she exercised over the most loving and devoted husband that ever wore a crown; nor were the liveliness of her manners, and the toss of her small well-shaped head, out of keeping with the *piquante* and somewhat theatrical character of her beauty. Even as Bosville entered, she had taken Lord Holland aside into a window, and by the well-pleased expression which pervaded the handsome face of the courtier, it was obvious that, not only was he flattered by the attention, but that he was yielding most unreservedly to the request, whatever it might be, of his beautiful Sovereign.

Harry Jermyn stood by, apparently not too well pleased. Handsome Harry Jermyn, who would never have been distinguished by that epithet had he not been a Queen's minion, certainly did not at this moment show to advantage, a threatening scowl contracting his features, and a paleness, more perhaps the result of dissipation than ill-health, overspreading his somewhat wasted face. A woman's tact saw the pain that a woman's pity was too ready to alleviate, and a woman's wit was at no loss for an excuse to break up the interview with Holland, and release her favourite

servant from his uneasiness. Beckoning him to her side with a kind smile, of which she knew well the power, she pointed to Bosville, who had just entered the presence-chamber, and bid him inquire the name of the young Cavalier. 'I remember his face,' she said, fastening her black eyes on Jermyn, 'as I never forget a face that pleases me, and I will have him brought up and presented to me. I will be personally acquainted with all my comrades, for am not I too a soldier myself?' And she pointed with her little hand, and laughed her sweet silvery laugh, and Harry Jermyn looked as if the sun was shining once again for him like the rest of the world.

So Humphrey was led up to the Queen, and kissed her hand, and performed his obeisance, and Henrietta made a graceful allusion to the conduct of his brigade at Newbury, and bantered him on 'his new character,' as she was pleased to term it, of a 'Squire of Dames,' and beckoning to Mary Cave, bid her reward her guardian for the care he had taken of her, by now placing him *au fait* to all the gossip of the Court, 'in which no one is better versed than thyself, *méchante Marie*,' added the Queen, and so turned away to her own intrigues and her own devices, having made at least one heart happy amongst her courtiers, and bought its life-long devotion at the price of a little ready tact and a few light words.

Mary could not but be sensible of the influence she was rapidly obtaining over the young Cavalier captain. Women are usually sufficiently quick-sighted in these matters, and she was no exception in this respect to the rest of her sex. Grieved and unhappy as she now

was, her every hope destroyed, and the light of her life, as she felt, darkened for ever, there was yet something soothing and consolatory in the considerate and unselfish devotion of this brave enthusiastic nature. She never considered that what was 'sport to her' might be 'death to him;' that whilst she was merely leaning on him, as it were, for a temporary support, lulled and flattered by the romantic adoration which she felt she had inspired, *he* might be twining round his heart a thousand links of that golden chain which, when it is torn away, carries with it the lacerated fragments of the treasure it enclosed, might be anchoring all his trust and all his happiness on a dream, to wake from which might be a life's misery, might even be madness or death. 'Children and fools,' saith the proverb, 'should not meddle with edge-tools.' Are not all mankind more or less children, rather more than less fools? Why will they persist in cutting their own fingers; always ready to run the risk, however averse to paying the penalty? Mary thought but little of these things. If such a reflection did cross her mind, she saw in her victim a glorious instrument of the Cause—the Cause for which Falkland had died, the Cause to which she had vowed her life, her energies, her all! In the intoxicating atmosphere of a Court, amongst all the glitter of rank, and fame, and beauty, it seemed so natural to be wooed and idolized, so pleasant to possess the charm that subjugates all mankind, so noble to use it for a patriotic cause. They were placed in the embrasure of a window, somewhat apart from the throng. She was seated with her head resting on one rounded arm, over which a

ringlet of her nut-brown hair fell to the dimpled elbow; he was standing by her side leaning over her, and trembling in every fibre to the notes of her silvery voice; he, a stout swordsman, a gallant soldier, a young, strong, hearty man, and yet his cheek paled, and he withdrew his gaze every time she lifted her soft blue eyes to his face.

‘We cannot fail,’ she said, ‘with such men as these on our side. See, Captain Bosville, look around you, the noblest names in England are gathered here to-night, and there is not one of them that will not risk his *all*, ay, and lose it too, contentedly, for the King. You men are strangely prejudiced,’ she added, looking up at him with a smile, ‘but you are very devoted to your prejudices; if women are accused of being *wilful*, commend me at least to a man for *obstinacy*!’

‘And does not perseverance deserve to be rewarded?’ asked he, with a somewhat faltering voice. ‘If a man will devote himself body and soul, heart and energy, to the attainment of any one object, ought he not to prosper? Does he not always succeed?’

‘Generally, if he is sufficiently obstinate,’ answered Mary, with a laugh, at which her companion’s face brightened into a pleasant smile. ‘But self-devotion is indeed the noblest quality of a man. If there is one I admire more than all the rest of the world, it is he who can propose to himself a glorious end and aim in life, and who can strive for it through all obstacles, whatever be the danger, whatever the difficulty; who never takes his eyes from off the goal, and who if he

dies in the pursuit, at least dies stanch and unconquered to the last!

‘And such a one,’ exclaimed Bosville, with flashing eyes and quivering lip, ‘such a one could command your admiration, could win your love?’

‘I said not that, Captain Bosville,’ she replied, but her countenance never changed colour, and her eye never drooped, as it would once have done at words like these. He might have known then that she did not love him, that hers was the master-mind of the two; but he was blind, as those are always blind, who see through the glasses of their own wilful affections. ‘I said not that, but yet I may say that I never could care for one who lacked these qualities, and that if ever I could give my heart away, it would be to one such as I have described.’ She sighed heavily while she spoke, and turned her head away. He did not hear the sigh, his blood was boiling, and his brain confused. He did not see the cold, rigid face of the dead at Newbury; the face that was haunting his fair companion day by day; he did not see another sweet pale face looking at him from her father’s side in the very presence-chamber, singling him out from amongst the crowd of courtly gallants and beauteous dames, from the mass of silks and satins, and rustling brocade and flashing jewellery; a pale sweet face, with a mournful smile and a reproachful expression in its dark, fawn-like eyes. No, he had thoughts but for one, and the fingers that closed upon his sword-hilt were white with the pressure of his grasp, as he spoke almost in a whisper.

‘And could such lifelong devotion win you, Mary,

at the last? Will you accept life and fortune, and all, to give in return, but one little word, one word of kindness, encouragement, and hope?"

She smiled sweetly up at him; how could she do otherwise? She must have been more or less than woman not to feel at least gratified by such admiration as his, and yet it was the smile of pity rather than affection, such a smile as wreathes the lips of those who have lived out their life of passion here.

'Hush,' she said, 'Captain Bosville. Loyalty before all; the King! the King!'

Even as she spoke a silence succeeded to the rustling of dresses and the hum of voices that had hitherto pervaded the presence-chamber, and a lane, formed by the bowing crowd, and extending from the large folding doors up to the Queen herself, heralded the approach of royalty. A lane formed of the noblest and the best-born in England, of whom not one man or woman that bent the head in loyal reverence, but would have laid that head willingly to rest in the field, or forfeited it on the scaffold, for the sake of the unfortunate monarch who now paced up the hall, returning the obeisance of his subjects with the dignified and melancholy sweetness which never, even in his worst misfortunes, for an instant deserted him.

Bosville was not familiar with the person of his Sovereign; he had now an opportunity of studying the aspect of that man—a mere man like himself, after all, whose rank invested him with a magical interest that commanded the fortunes and the lives of his subjects. Charles bore on his whole exterior the impress of his character,—nay, more—to a fanciful

observer there was something in his countenance and manners that seemed to presage misfortune. Of no stately presence, he had yet a well-knit and graceful figure, hardened and trained into activity by those sports and exercises in which he had acquired no mean proficiency. Few of his subjects could vie with their monarch in his younger days at the games of balloon, rackets, or tennis; could handle the sword more skilfully, or ride 'the great horse' with fairer grace and management; even at middle age, despite a trifling and scarcely perceptible malformation of the limbs, his pedestrian powers were such as to inconvenience to a great extent those dutiful courtiers who were compelled to keep pace with him in his walks, and although in his childhood of a weakly constitution, he had acquired before he grew up a firm and vigorous *physique* that was capable of sustaining, as he afterwards proved repeatedly in his unfortunate career, not only the extremes of bodily fatigue and hardship, but what is infinitely more hard to bear, the gnawing and destructive anxieties of daily failure and disappointment. But in Charles's face a physiognomist would too surely have discovered the signs of those mixed qualities which rendered him the most ill-fated of monarchs as he was the most amiable of men. There was ideality without comprehensiveness in the high narrow forehead, there was vacillation in the arched and elevated eyebrow, the full, well-cut eye was clear, and open, and beautiful, but its expression was dreamy and abstracted, the gaze of a sage, a philosopher, or a devotee, not the quick eager glance of a man of action and resource. His other features were well-

formed and regular, but the upper lip was somewhat too curled and full for masculine beauty, whilst the jaw lacked that expression of power and firmness which is never absent from the face of a truly great man. His long, dark locks curling down upon his shoulders, his bushy moustache and pointed beard, added to the pleasing yet melancholy expression of his countenance, and with his rich attire, his magnificent lace collar, and jewelled 'George' hanging about his neck, perfected the ideal of a chivalrous high-minded monarch, who was worthy of the position he occupied and the devotion he commanded, who was no unfit centre around which grouped themselves the proudest, the bravest, the noblest, the most enthusiastic aristocracy that ever failed to save a sovereign.

They were thronging about him now. The chivalrous and princely Newcastle, who lavished fortunes for his monarch's entertainment as ungrudgingly as he poured forth his blood in his service; splendid in his apparel, stately in his person, magnificent in his bearing, a true specimen of the English nobleman; a Paladin in the field, a *grand seigneur* in the drawing-room, kindly, and frank, and hearty in each; wooing the Muses with no contemptible success during the intervals of his eventful career, and charging the Parliamentary troopers with a resolute energy that made the 'silken general,' as they were pleased to term him, the terror of all. Respected by the Prince of Wales, whose boyhood had been committed to his care, trusted by the Queen, who found in him all those noble sentiments she most admired and looked for in vain amongst her other favourites, and beloved by Charles himself, who recog-

nised in him the more splendid qualities of Buckingham, without Buckingham's selfishness, recklessness, and Protean vacillation of character. And we are best acquainted with Newcastle now as the author of a folio book upon horsemanship!

The scientific Leicester, skilled in classic lore, and a better mathematician than a soldier, as indeed the certainty of results exacted by the one is far removed from the haphazard readiness of resource indispensable to the other. Somewhat jealous, it may be, and displeased that his appointment to the Lieutenancy of Ireland had been cancelled, yet faithful in his heart to his Sovereign, and bearing next that heart a panacea for all bitterness and ill-feeling in a letter from his loving Countess, whose devoted attachment to the Earl was as proverbial in a Court more notorious for complicated intrigue than conjugal fidelity, as was that of the celebrated lady whose lord was alone qualified to drink out of the 'cup of gold' which stood on King Arthur's round table, and which, if we are to believe the scandal of the old romances, spilt its contents over every beard save that of Caradoc, so rare in those days was the crown which virtuous women placed upon the brows of their husbands.

The courtly Wilmot, a professed wit, a finished gentleman, addicted to wine and debauchery, but a cool and scientific soldier, continually labouring under some imputation against his courage, which he was as continually wiping out by daring strategy and brilliant achievements. Looked upon with dislike by the Court, which yet feared him for the sting of his ready tongue, and mistrusted by the King, who

nevertheless employed him on the most important duties, he seemed to rely solely on himself; and whilst his serene visage and equable demeanour totally repudiated all romance and enthusiasm, the repose and self-confidence of his bearing denoted the man who was all in all to his own requirements, *totus teres atque rotundus*, impassible as a Stoic and contented as an Epicurean.

Different indeed from his next neighbour, who was describing to him, with a vast amount of action and energy, completely thrown away upon Wilmot's unresponsive apathy, a new-fashioned handle for that goodly weapon, the pike. Sir Jacob Astley was no cool philosopher, no sneering cynic, but a warm-hearted, warm-blooded, bold, hearty, and God-fearing man. A devoted soldier, an active and judicious officer, a conscientious councillor; whatever his hand found to do that did he with all his heart and all his soul. Threescore winters and more had shed their snows upon his head, and wherever hard blows were going he had taken fully his share, yet his eye was bright, his cheek was ruddy, and his frame was still square and strong. A good conscience is a wondrous specific for longevity; and who but a soldier with a good conscience could have offered up Sir Jacob's famous prayer at the head of his column before the Battle of Edgehill,—‘Oh Lord! thou knowest how busy I must be this day; if I forget thee do not thou forget me. March on, boys!’

Towering over Sir Jacob's grey head, his eagle eye wandering far away into the distance, looking beyond that courtly web of silk and satin, and his tall figure

resting on his long straight sword, stood Prince Rupert—the fiery Hotspur of his day, the cavalry officer whose charge was always victorious, and whose victory always terminated in defeat; of whom it has been said that he never failed to win ‘his share of the battle,’ yet whose success, by some fatality, invariably led to the discomfiture of his friends. The active partisan, whose element seemed to be war, and who had buckled on a sword and ridden side by side with distinguished generals and fierce troopers at an age when most boys are flying a kite or trundling a hoop; who, failing employment on land, was fain to seek bloodshed and fighting at sea, embarking on the duties of an admiral with the same bold recklessness that had equally distinguished him at the head of a column of iron-clad cavalry, or charging with a handful of Cavaliers in his shirt; and who, when the sea refused to offer him opportunities of distinction, as the land had long ago failed to give him scope for his ambition, could sit down contentedly in a peaceful capital, and occupy himself with the gentle resources of chemistry and painting.

His high aquiline features, according so well with a stature which, though light and sinewy, approached the gigantic, his broad, clear, restless eye, and his wide, massive brow, shaded as it was by a profusion of somewhat tangled hair, denoted the man of courage and action, the gallant spirit that knew no calculation of odds, the indomitable heart that acknowledged neither failure nor reverse. Sir Jacob had better have been talking to the Prince about his pike handles, for Rupert, like every real soldier, took a lively in-

terest in them, as he had a thorough knowledge of details; but in his heart the old man thought the young one somewhat hot-headed and inexperienced, so he would rather not enter upon a discussion in which he would feel tempted to disagree with his Sovereign's nephew. He had seen him tried too, and he could not but acknowledge that 'the lad,' as he called him, was brave and active, a zealous captain and a shrewd tactician, but he had one fault which elderly men are apt to consider unpardonable in their juniors, although it is a fault which improves every day—he was *too young*.

So Prince Rupert stood musing all alone amongst that brilliant assemblage; gazing, in his mind's eye, on many a scene of rout and confusion, many a fancied skirmish and remembered victory; the broken enemy, the maddened troopers striking right and left with the savage recklessness of fiends; the compact columns of the reserve sweeping up like some strong wave to complete the destruction which has been commenced by its predecessors; the wild hurrah of victory rising loud and stirring above the ringing pistol-shots, and the tramp of squadrons, and the groans of the fallen; the loose chargers with streaming reins, galloping at random here and there; the plumes, and scarfs, and glittering steel of the Cavaliers waving and flashing through the smoke; all the fierce revelry and confusion of the battle he was picturing in his day-dream. Suddenly he started, and turned round to address one after his own heart, to greet him with the frank cordiality peculiar to men of the sword. Sir Ralph Hopton, maimed and dis-

abled, scorched and scarred by the explosion of a powder-barrel at the Battle of Lansdowne, and only just capable of hobbling on crutches to pay his respects to the King, stood close to the Prince's elbow, and the dream of battle vanished, and the reality of warfare became more tangible as the two stanch, keen soldiers plunged into a deep and interesting discussion on the one absorbing interest of their lives.

And again Prince Rupert started, and the colour rose to his high broad forehead, and the eagle eye moved restlessly in its orbit. And to Sir Ralph's question upon the new cavalry formations lately introduced on the Continent, he returned an incoherent answer that hugely astonished the practical soldier, for the Queen, with her bevy of ladies, was moving through the hall; and as she approached the spot where her husband's nephew had stationed himself, one of the fair dames in attendance shot a glance at Prince Rupert that confused him far more than could have done a volley of small-arms; and the beautiful Duchess of Richmond passed on like some fairy vision, and Rupert was restless and uneasy for the rest of the night.

Yes; if the King was surrounded by a band of high-minded and sincere noblemen, ready to risk life and fortune in his cause, the Queen, too, on her side, had provided herself with a body-guard of beauty, none the less stanch and uncompromising in the politics they espoused, that for push of pike and sweep of sword-blade they used the more fatal weapons of grace and fascination with which they were familiar, dissolving alliances with the flutter of a fan, and

scattering coalitions with the artillery of a glance. Merry Mrs. Kirke was there with her sparkling eyes and her dimpled smile, passing her jest, somewhat of the broadest, and laughing her laugh, somewhat of the loudest, with the daring freedom and conscious immunity of an acknowledged beauty. There, too, was lovely Lady Isabella Thynne, whose dignity and grace, and sweet romantic charms, were said by the voice of scandal to have made an impression even on the true uxorious heart of Charles himself. That Henrietta felt no jealousy of this dangerous lady, no mistrust in her hold over the affections of her doating husband, may be gathered from the confidence with which she encouraged her about her person, and the opportunities of unreserved intercourse she afforded her with the King. Was the lively Frenchwoman a stranger to this feminine failing of jealousy? or was she like Queen Guenever, who was willing to concede the liberty she exacted, and who, lenient

To human frailty, construed mild,
Looked upon Lancelot, and smiled?

And there too, in her weeds for her gallant young husband, moved the graceful form of Kate, Lady D'Aubigny, the young and interesting widow, who was weeping for the untimely fate of her chivalrous lord, yet whose witty sallies flashing occasionally through the gloom that overshadowed her, argued her not altogether inconsolable, and who was lending an ear already, with something more than a mere courteous interest, to Hawley's tender whispers and respectful adoration.

And fair 'Mistress Watt' stood by and seemed not to listen, and refrained, with congenial hypocrisy, from what she would have termed the offence of 'spoiling sport.' Pretty Mistress Watt! who had often herself been indebted to such consideration on the part of others, and whose charming face and lively manners and matchless impudence had conferred upon her a station at Court and an influence amongst courtiers to which neither her birth nor her attainments would have entitled her had she simply been demure and virtuous, instead of charming and good-for-nothing.

But of all intriguers of the gentler sex—of all traitresses in love, friendship, and politics—who could compare with the soft, quiet, innocent-looking woman who now stood next the Queen, and to whom Henrietta confided the inmost counsels of her husband, as she did the dearest secrets of her own heart? Lucy, Countess of Carlisle, with her dove-like eyes and her sweet angelic smile, was formed by nature to have deceived the very Serpent that tempted our mother Eve. How madly had ambitious Strafford loved that calm, fair face! how had the harassed statesman, the impeached and fallen minister, rested on the love she had professed for him, as a solace for all his sorrows, a refuge from all his dangers. For her he toiled, for her he was ambitious, for her he was long triumphant—and she betrayed him—first in love, then in politics; betrayed him into the hands of his enemy, and transferred her affections to his destroyer. Who shall say that the bitterest drop in his cup, deserted as he felt himself by his Sovereign,

and deceived by his peers, was not poured into it by the hand of the woman he had adored?

Keen were his pangs, but keener far to feel
He nursed the pinion that impelled the steel;
And the same plumage that had warmed his nest,
Now drank the life-drops from his bleeding breast.

So she sacrificed him ruthlessly, and abandoned herself to the caresses of his enemy. And there was something about this woman that could subjugate even a busy voluptuary like Pym, one who combined in his own person the two most hardened of all characters—the professed politician and the confirmed sensualist. He was as devoted to her as his natural organization would allow of his being devoted to anything; and when she had thoroughly won him and subjugated him, and he trusted her, why, she deceived him too. And so she followed out her career of treachery, disloyal as a wife, heartless as a mistress, and false as a friend. Yet of all the ladies about the Court, the Countess of Carlisle had most influence with the Queen, was most conversant with her innermost thoughts, her secret intentions; was the busiest weaver of that web of intrigues and dissimulation in which Henrietta, to do her justice, took as much delight as any Arachne of her sex.

And all this glitter and pageantry, these beautiful women, these noble and distinguished men, passed before the eyes of Humphrey Bosville like a dream. Young as he was, scarcely a thrill of conscious pride shot through him to be recognised and kindly accosted by Prince Rupert as the daring soldier whose value was readily and generously acknowledged by

the frank and outspoken Prince. Not an inch higher did he hold his head, to be conscious that amongst all these heroes and warriors he was of them as well as with them; that he, too, had a station and a name, and a chance of distinction that might raise him to a level with the proudest. Nay, when old Colepepper brought him up to the sacred circle of which Majesty itself formed the centre, and with a glow of good-natured gratification on his scarred visage recalled him to the monarch's memory, and Charles pleasantly reminded him of their last meeting at his simple bivouac, the day after Newbury, scarcely a flush of gratified vanity coloured the cheek of the young Cavalier. And no courtier of twenty years' standing could have sustained with a more unmoved air the favouring notice of the King, and the still more confusing glances from the bevy of beauties that surrounded the Queen, and on whom Humphrey's handsome exterior made no displeasing impression.

'Who is he?' whispered Mr. Hyde to Lady Carlisle, bending his stiff and somewhat pompous figure to approach that dame with the air of a finished gallant—an air the lettered and accomplished historian much affected with indifferent success—an air that somehow is less easily caught by the brotherhood of the pen than those of the sword. 'Who is he, this imperturbable young gentleman, who seems as little affected by his Majesty's condescension as by the glances of your ladyship's dazzling and star-like eyes?'

Lady Carlisle laughed under the skin, but she was civil and conciliatory to all. It was part of her

system never to throw a chance away; so she professed her ignorance with a gracious sentence and a sweet smile, and such a glance from the eyes he had praised as sent Mr. Hyde away delighted, and convinced that he had made a conquest. Truly, 'the wisest clerks are not the wisest men.'

And yet Humphrey had his dream too. Was he not young; and is it not the privilege of youth to lay up a store of disappointment for maturity? His dream was of distinction truly, and of laurels to be gathered, and honours to be gained; but it was not selfish distinction; and the honours and the laurels were but to be flung at the feet of another. And then the dream was to have a happy conclusion. Peace, and repose, and happiness he hardly dared to fancy, after he had done his duty and completed his task. A home of Love, and Beauty, and Content; a pair of blue eyes that would always smile kindly upon him—that would always make his heart leap, as it leaped to meet them now. A form that he adored entrusted to his guardianship, sleeping and waking to watch over and care for, and cherish to the end. After that, a purer and holier, a more lasting but not more ardent love, in another and a better world.

Dreams! dreams! Yet of all the dreamers that left Merton College that night—the scheming statesmen, the ambitious warriors, the intriguing courtiers—perhaps Humphrey was the one whose vision most elevated his moral being; whose awakening, unlike that of the others, bitter as it must be, would leave him, if a sadder, at least a wiser and a better man.

CHAPTER XII.

'NIGHT-HAWKS!'

FROM time immemorial—long ere poetry had sung of bright-haired Endymion sleeping on the mountain bathed in the lustre of his Goddess-Love, or told how gentle Romeo sighed, and longing Juliet leaned and listened to his vows, the moon has been the planet especially consecrated to the worship of lovers and lunatics. ‘*Arcules ambo,*’ which is the greater insanity of the two? To sit in a cell, a straw-crowned maniac, peopling the moonbeams as they stream in through the grated window with visions of pomp and splendour and royalty, and all the picturesque pageantry of a madman’s brain? or to wander at large a harmless and pensive idiot, bareheaded, defiant of rheumatism, breathing sighs into the night-air, and identifying all the glories of the universe, the mellow beauty of earth, and the brilliant Infinite of heaven, with the image of a mere two-legged animal like himself, no whit loftier nor better than the rest of her kind, and exalted by the monomania of the worshipper alone into an idol, of which, to his distempered fancy, the very stars of heaven do but glimmer in faint and envious rivalry?

Humphrey Bosville paced thoughtfully along the quiet streets; he marked not how the clear cold

moonlight silvered the shafts and pinnacles of many a Gothic edifice, defining in bold relief the massive buttress and the stately tower, the deep embrasure of the arched and pointed window, the delicate tracery of the elaborate and florid scroll; shimmering over belfry and chancel, and quivering as it lost itself amongst the dark foliage of the lofty elms that nodded and whispered over all; or if he did turn his face ever and anon from the cold smooth pavement on which his eyes were bent, and draw a full breath of the fresh night air, and feast his sight upon the lustrous heaven, it was but to relieve a heart overcharged with its late happiness; to recal in the beauty of nature the magic of that witching face which was fast becoming heaven and earth, and all besides, to him.

He was in the mood for which solitude is an absolute necessity, and yet which chance excitement or adventure can drive into the wildest extremes—a mood in which the heart seems incapable of supporting the weight of its own happiness, and seeks relief even in tears from the intensity of its bliss. Does it not argue that the child of man is born to sorrow rather than joy, thus to be forced to acknowledge that there is suffering in an excess of the latter—that poor weak human nature can but weep after all when it is best pleased? But take comfort! such tears are not those which we are too often called upon to shed; and he has not lived in vain who has known what it is to weep for joy,—ay, if it be but once in a lifetime!

Nevertheless, as honest Iago says, or rather sings—

A soldier's a man,
 A life's but a span,
 Why then let a soldier drink!

And the Cavaliers, if they were 'lads that loved the moon,' loved her not so much for the peaceful and poetic thoughts that she inspired, as for the assistance afforded by her light to those homeward-bound wassailers who had been vindicating their loyalty by drinking deeply to the King's health and to the detriment of their own. Ere Humphrey was half-way home to his lodging he was arrested by the sounds of revelry and good fellowship issuing from the portals of a venerable edifice, where dwelt a grave and portly Churchman, now the courteous host of wild Lord Goring, and for whom that reckless guest professed and entertained the profoundest respect, because, to use his own words, 'the Doctor could drink like a trooper and behave like a King, besides being a thorough master of his own profession, of which,' quoth Goring, 'I do not pretend to be so good a judge.' His lordship was even now at the height of his revelry, and was trilling forth in his rich sweet voice, unimpaired by all his vices, a jingling Cavalier melody, in the chorus of which the worthy Doctor's deep bass predominated, and to which, preoccupied as he was, Humphrey could not refrain from stopping to listen:—

Ho! fill me a flagon as deep as you please,
 Ho! pledge me the health that we quaff on our knees;
 And the knave who refuses to drink till he fall,
 Why the hangman shall crop him—ears, love-locks, and all.
 Then a halter we'll string,
 And the rebel shall swing,
 For the gallants of England are up for the King!

Ho! saddle my horses as quick as you may,
 The sorrel, the black, and the white-footed bay;
 The troop shall be mustered, the trumpets shall peal,
 And the Roundheads shall taste of the Cavalier's steel.

For the little birds sing,
 There are hawks on the wing,
 When the gallants of England are up for the King!

Ho! fling me my beaver, and toss me the glove
 That but yesterday clung to the hand of my love,
 To be bound on my crest—to be borne in the van,
 And the rebel that reaps it must fight like a man!

For the sabre shall swing
 And the head-pieces ring,
 When the gallants of England strike home for the King!

Ho! crush me a cup to the Queen of my heart;
 Ho! fill me a brimmer, the last ere we part;
 A health to Prince Rupert! Success and renown!
 To the dogs with the Commons! and up with the Crown.

Then the stirrup-cup bring,
 Quaff it round in a ring!
 To your horses! and ride to the death for the King!

As they shouted the concluding verse a party of five or six riotous Cavaliers emerged arm in arm from the deep archway of the gate opposite to where Humphrey stood. They were whooping, laughing, and jesting; and although they had left their worthy entertainer staid and sober as became a Churchman, were themselves more than half drunk. Goring had lighted a torch, and with mock gravity was brandishing it in the moonlight, as he said, to see 'what sort of night it was.' Wild Tom Lunsford, leaning on his long sheathed rapier, which bent and swayed beneath his weight, was ranting out some playhouse verses in praise of 'Cynthia's mellow light;' and Black Will

Searthe, the fiercest of partisans and most savage of *condottieri*, was rocking himself to and fro against the wall, muttering fearful imprecations and vowing a deathless vengeance on some person or persons unknown, mingled with expressions of fervent admiration and undying regard for young Lord Francis Villiers, whom by some strange perversion of his drunken brain he persisted in addressing as Prince Rupert, and clothing in the attributes and endowments of that distinguished leader. Lord Francis laughed till his sides ached.

'Take him away, George,' said the young nobleman to Goring, 'or he will be the death of me. Why, Will!—Black Will!—dost not know thy friends from thy foes, man? Here be I, thy sworn comrade and companion for these three hours past, and thou canst mistake me for the Prince Palatine; he who would have tried thee at Edgehill for cowardice and hanged thee at Lansdowne for plunder. For shame, man, for shame!'

Black Will scowled fearfully, and his right hand closed involuntarily on the hilt of his rapier: but drunk as he was, he knew he must pay the penalty of associating with his betters, and submit if necessary to be their butt. So, although he winced and ground his teeth, he ventured on no open demonstrations of resentment, even when Goring aimed another shaft at him tipped with the venom of truth, and bid him remember the woman whose ear-rings he tore from her head in the Low Countries.

'Fore George, Will, thou hadst a narrow escape that time of the riding school and the strappado!

Had she gone with her complaint to Monk instead of me, thou hadst been sped—he would have hanged thee to the nearest tree ; and had she been a likely wench, Will, even I must have seen justice done, and the halberds up. But she was a swarthy quean, black-browed and ill-favoured as Will himself, my lads ! So we buckled to, and the Stadtholder's drunken chaplain married them ; and she followed the army as Dame Searthe, and Will had the ear-rings for a marriage portion, and he never got rid of her till we lost all our baggage at Breda ; and she kicked Will out and took the command of the enemy's 'woman troop.' Egad, she was the veriest Tartar of them all ! And thou wast not over sorry to be free once more, Will, for i'faith she was thy master !

'At least, General, she was never thy mistress,' answered Will, with a sneer and a savage scowl ; 'and that is more than can be boasted of many a daintier dame that rode a pillion in the rear of our troop. But enough said, my masters. Look you here—a sail, a sail !' And Black Will as he spoke staggered to his legs, and pointed to a white dress flitting rapidly away in the distance, accompanied by the tall dark figure of a man ; and signing to his companions to follow him, proceeded rapidly in chase, though with wavering and uncertain steps.

'Let them go,' said Lord Francis, in whom, drunk or sober, the instincts of a gentleman predominated. 'Tis a lady from the Court or an honest citizen's wife at the least. If thou layest a hand on her, Will, I will cudgel the soul out of thee, by all the gods of love and war !'

'After midnight, my lord,' laughed out Tom Lunsford, recently returned from his imprisonment amongst the Puritans, and mad with delight to find himself once more surrounded by congenial spirits, wicked and reckless as his own, 'after midnight every sail's a prize! Black Will has not been on the Spanish Main for nothing, and he knows buccaneer's law better than his prayers. Down with the bunting! up with the hatches!—share and share alike, and no quarter!'

'Then here goes to be first aboard the prize!' exclaimed Goring, limping nimbly along despite his lameness, and waving the rest on as he was used to wave his troopers forward in a charge, with shout and jeer, and strange, quaint, fearful oaths. The other Cavaliers whooped and laughed in the spirit of the jest, pushing and bantering each other as they hurried on in full pursuit of the rapidly retreating chase, making such way, notwithstanding reeling steps and singing brains, as promised soon to bring them alongside.

Meantime, pale and sick, her little heart beating fast against the arm of her protector, her knees knocking together, and her limbs failing at her need, the frightened woman, no other than our old acquaintance Faith, tripped rapidly on. She was returning from her nightly duties with her mistress to her own lodging in another street, and escorted by her faithful cavalier, the imperturbable Dymocke, had enjoyed and perhaps prolonged her moonlight walk to an unjustifiable extent. A moment ago she had been expatiating to her admirer on the beauties of Oxford, and the bewitching delights of a town; now she would have

given all she possessed to be safe back at quiet Bough-ton, or anywhere else in the world out of hearing of those alarming footsteps! Like the hare closely pursued by the noisy pack, her heart sank within her, and her natural impulse was to sit down in despair and give in. The poor girl said as much as she clung closer and closer to the tall spare form against which she leaned.

Dymocke was stanch to the backbone. 'Don't ye leave go of my belt,' said he, grasping a goodly oak cudgel, the only weapon he had with him, in his brown bony hand, and preparing, with his usual grave demeanour, for a tough resistance. 'Keep you behind me, my lass: and if it's wild Lord Goring himself, or the devil, whose servant he is, I'll ring twelve o'clock on his pate if he offers to lay a finger on you. Only don't ye leave go of my belt.'

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the foremost of their pursuers came alongside.

'By your leave, kind madam,' said a soft sweet voice, in the gentle accents of a courtier, while a white hand, adorned with a rich lace ruffle, unceremoniously lifted the veil which covered Faith's drooping head; and a perfumed moustache and good-looking face, somewhat flushed with wine, approached closely to her own, with the evident purpose of stealing a kiss. Dymocke's cudgel was aloft in an instant, but ere it could come down, Goring's quick eye had caught the movement, and his ready hand seized the uplifted wrist, and grappling with Faith's defender, he sought to trip him up with one of those tricks of wrestling which give the initiated such advantage in a personal

conflict. The nobleman had, however, met with his match. Dymocke's tall, wiry person was toughened by constant exercise into the consistency of steel; and while his length of limb gave him every facility for performing all feats of skill and agility, his extraordinary coolness of temper enabled him to detect the slightest weakness on the part of his adversary, and make ready use of it for his own benefit.

They had scarcely closed ere Goring measured his length upon the pavement; and though he regained his feet in an instant, that instant had sufficed to place Dymocke, with the uplifted cudgel, once more upon his guard.

Goring's smile was not pleasant to look upon as his right hand stole towards his sword. In another moment the wicked blade was flashing in the moonlight, winding under the guard of honest Dymocke's cudgel with quick glittering passes, all athirst for blood; at the same time a blow from Tom Lunsford's sheathed sword on the back of the serving-man's head somewhat stunned him; while Black Will Scarthe, winding his arm round poor Faith's waist, strove to detach her by main force from her protector, to whose person she clung with a tenacity that much impeded his efforts for their mutual defence. The other Cavaliers stood around, laughing and shouting, and laying wagers on the event of the skirmish.

'Fair play!' cried Lord Francis; 'two to one is no even match. Give the knave a sword, some one; or do you, Goring, borrow my riding-wand!'

'Hand us over the wench,' exclaimed another; 'she

does but hamper her man; and cold steel is an ugly neighbour for bodice and pinnars.'

'Take her away from Black Will,' laughed a third. 'Look how she trembles, like a dove in the clutch of a night-hawk.'

'A rescue! a rescue!' shouted a fourth; 'here comes a heron for the hawk. 'Ware beak and talons, general, this is one of your high-flyers, and he'll soar his pitch before he has done with you, I'll warrant him!'

Even as he spoke, Humphrey Bosville, who in the outraged couple had recognised his own and Mistress Allonby's attendant, strode up, pale and breathless, his blood boiling with indignation, and all the soft feelings that had so lately pervaded his being turned to fierce and ungovernable wrath. Tearing away a good yard of Flanders lace as he seized him by the collar, with one turn of his wrist he put Black Will down on his back in the kennel as if he had been shot. Giving Lunsford at the same time the benefit of a push from his muscular shoulder that sent the tipsy, laughing Cavalier staggering into the middle of the street, he confronted Goring with scowling brows and flashing eyes, and bade him put up his sword for shame, drawn as it was against an unarmed man.

'I claim the quarrel for myself, my lord,' he exclaimed, 'whatever it may be. This man is my servant, this damsel belongs to the household of Sir Giles Allonby. Gentlemen, I take you all to witness! Lord Goring has put an affront on me that I am compelled to resent.'

With these words, he stepped quietly up to the

astonished nobleman, who had now sheathed his rapier, and was listening to him with his usual air of amused *nonchalance*, and drawing his glove from his left hand, smote Goring gently with it across the cheek; then, erect and defiant, stood with his hand upon the guard of his sword, as if ready to draw and encounter the violence he had provoked.

'Gentlemen, dear gentlemen! for the love of Heaven!' pleaded poor Faith, now fairly frightened into tears. 'Oh, Captain Bosville, I entreat you, sir. The gentleman meant no harm. It was an accident; nothing but an accident from beginning to end!'

Faith was sufficiently a woman to feel very uncomfortable when fairly engaged in a broil, however ready she might be to enter upon its commencement; and although she little thought to what ulterior disturbances the admiration she had excited might lead, her intuitive tact told her that there was danger in the Captain's flushed brow, and mischief in Goring's pale, smiling face.

He kept his temper beautifully: he always kept his temper when he was *really* angry, that bold, bad man. Saving that his cheek was a shade paler, while the well-known smile deepened into furrows round his mouth, and that he caressed his sleek moustache with one white hand, even his old associate, Tom Lunsford, could not have told that aught had occurred to ruffle the general's equanimity, or that there was *murder* lurking beneath that passionless exterior.

'This is no case for chance medley, Captain Bosville!' he remarked, in quiet and studiedly polite tones; 'no offence that can be wiped out in a couple

of passes, with a buff-coat on for defence, and perhaps a scratch of the arm for satisfaction. Are you aware that a file of musketeers and ten yards of sward is the punishment for mutiny in the Royal army? Are you aware that you have struck your superior officer?’

‘I am aware that I have been insulted by a *gentleman*, and resented it as becomes a Cavalier,’ was the bold and unhesitating reply. Such an answer was a conclusive argument in the days of which we write. Fairfax, Cromwell, Monk, some few of the Parliamentary generals, might have deemed their position excluded them from the duty of causelessly hazarding their lives on a point of honour; but perhaps there was hardly an officer of the Royal army who would not have felt, like Goring, that in a case of private brawl it was incumbent on him to waive all considerations of relative rank and military discipline; to take and give that irrational and after all inconclusive satisfaction which the ordeal by battle affords.

And yet there are many arguments to be urged by the advocates of duelling, which, in an imperfect state of society, it is difficult to refute. The practice has come down to us from the days of chivalry, when, in the absence of wholesome legal restraint, of an irresponsible tribunal to which to appeal, the God of battles was called upon to arbitrate between man and man, to vindicate the oppressed in the person of a champion, and to teach the oppressor, though backed by scores of warriors sheathed in steel, that his own good sword and his own right hand alone could avail him in his quarrel. The combat, *à l'outrance*, was in those days the representative of justice and the laws.

It was never disputed that, upon the same principle by which nations were justified in going to war to protect their honour or their rights, private individuals might avenge their insults and redress their wrongs. Shriveled by priest, and armed by squire, the champion rode into the lists, strong in his own rectitude and the justice of his cause. He had no morbid fear of bloodshed, no shrinking horror of death as the *worst* evil that can befall that compound of body and soul which we call man. If he had less reason than his descendant of the present day, he had more faith: which is the nobler quality of the two? The former can scarcely compute time, the latter boldly grasps eternity. So he clasped his vizor down, and laid his lance in rest, and the marshal of the lists bid him good speed with the solemn adjuration, 'God defend the right.' But now we have the law to redress our wrongs, and public opinion to avenge our insults. Well, if it were really so. If there were not many a mortal stab aimed at the defenceless, of which no legal tribunal can take cognizance, many a deep and lasting injury inflicted, for which public opinion offers neither salve nor compensation, wounds dealt with a poisoned weapon, which spread and throb and fester, and of which the world and its laws take neither notice nor account. Where is the ordeal by battle, then? 'Why,' we are tempted to exclaim in our agony, 'why can we not have it out, man to man, as Nature's first law, the law of self-defence, would seem to prompt?' Policy, expediency, a high state of civilization, the inadequacy of the redress, the chances of the conflict, all these are empty terms, signifying

nothing; they do not in the least affect the combative impulse inherent in man. There is but one good reason, and that a conclusive one. If God hath said, 'thou shalt not kill,' we must beware how we presume to interpret his command to suit our own views. The question becomes one, not of *morality*, but religion; not of policy, but salvation. Hard is the struggle, bitter is the victory. God help him who has to encounter the one and win the other. And God *will* help him who makes His law the standard of his actions and the guide of his own rebellious heart.

'Well crowed!' remarked Goring aside to Lunsford, by no means displeased to find his antagonist thus disposed for combat, and involuntarily owning that respect for courage which is felt and acknowledged by every brave man, and that Goring was *brave* as his sword none will be found to deny. 'Well crowed, indeed,' he repeated. 'Captain Bosville, I should be sorry to baulk you: Sir Thomas Lunsford has the length of my weapon; he lodges over against the tall old gates yonder. By the way, there is an absurd order about duelling, which will oblige us to go a mile or so outside the town. I told Crispe how it would be if he took the liberty of running Fred Aunion through the body within the precincts. 'Gad, the King would have shot him if we could have done without our useful "Nick." We must not fall into the same trap, Captain Bosville. Tom Lunsford shall inform your friend of the place, and for time, suppose we say to-morrow morning, or rather this morning at daybreak. Fair damsel, I kiss your hands' (to Faith, who was hovering white and trembling on the skirts

of the conversation) ; 'Captain Bosville, my service to you. Tom, I shall run him through the brisket as sure as he wears boots' (aside to his friend) ; and with a courtly bow of his plumed hat, and a pleasant laugh, Goring strode off on the arm of Sir Thomas Lunsford, leaving Humphrey standing, as it were, transfixed at the extraordinary coolness and carelessness of his formidable antagonist.

Whilst they proceed to the lodgings alluded to, opposite the great gates, there to discuss their future measures over a posset of burnt sack and a pipe of true Virginian tobacco, we will accompany Bosville to the apartment of his comrade, Effingham, on whose assistance he seemed instinctively to rely, and to whose friendship in any matter of real danger or difficulty he had never trusted in vain. Late as was the hour, Effingham had not yet returned to his lodging, and it was with a feeling of impatience and annoyance which none but those who have been similarly situated can appreciate, that Humphrey sat him down on a hard high-backed chair to beguile the moments till his host's arrival with a dry discourse on cavalry tactics, the only literature the soldier's quarters afforded, and his own pleasant reflections on the scrape into which his chivalry had led him, and the dangerous enemy he had provoked, matter sufficient for grave cogitation, yet through it all there ran a golden thread of dreamy contentment, in the thought of Mary's approval and Mary's fair bewitching face.

CHAPTER XIII.

‘FOR CONSCIENCE’ SAKE.’

AND where was George Effingham? The man of the sword, the upholder of tyranny, the confirmed malignant, an officer in the very army of Belial, a lost sheep, a brand deserving of the burning, a sinner in the last extremity of reprobation, for whom there was neither hope nor pity? Where had he spent his evening, that strange, dark, enthusiastic man? Let us follow his footsteps after he bade Humphrey farewell, when the latter was on his way to Merton College, and discover what startling scenes, what contrasts of life, and morals, and manners, and even men, loyal Oxford can afford.

With a stealthier step than usual, and many a backward glance, strangely at variance with his wonted bold, frank bearing, Effingham strode swiftly along the most unfrequented streets and narrowest lanes of the fair old town, nor did he slacken his pace or stop to acknowledge the greeting of friend or comrade, till he found himself in front of a low, dismal habitation, adorned with a heavy frowning porch, and a door ominously clamped and fastened with iron. Descending three very dirty steps, he pushed open the door, which gave way at once, and entered a small dingy apartment, to which a bare counter and a pair of rusty scales alone seemed to

affix the character of a shop. An ill-favoured woman presided over the former, and to Effingham's mysterious inquiry, 'Are the children gathered?' returned the equally mysterious reply, 'Even so, thou sojourner by the way, and there is water even in Zin for the children of the congregation!' This appeared a sufficient reason for the Cavalier officer to proceed, so passing through the shop, he traversed another door of equal strength and thickness, and descending a winding flight of steps, found himself in a roomy vault or cellar, supported upon strong massive arches, and lighted by the gloomy flicker of a few scattered torches, fixed at intervals in the damp reeking walls.

The vault was full, nay, crowded to the very steps, down which the Cavalier made his way; and though the contrast afforded by his gay habiliments with the sombre garb of those around him was sufficiently striking to excite remark, his arrival seemed to provoke no more attention than a momentary stir, and, as it were, a buzz of approbation amongst the assemblage.

They were no weak enthusiasts, no empty fanatics, no vacillating casuists, those men of iron gathered together in that dark vault, and now absorbed in prayer. 'Tis a strange compound, that Anglo-Saxon constitution, of which a dogged tenacity, an unconquerable fixedness of purpose, constitutes so essential an element. In all relations of life, in all climes, under all circumstances, in war, trade, art, or mechanics, it wrests for itself the premium of success, and even religion, which softens the human character

as it exalts the intellectual and diviner part of man, which tempers the wayward will and subdues the mutinous heart, fusing the moral being into one harmonious whole, doth not totally eradicate that unbending fixedness of purpose to which, under Providence, it owes its present purity, and the veneration with which it is upheld by our determined countrymen.

The flaring torches reddened many a bold and thoughtful brow amongst those who now turned to scan Etflingham, with an eager yet satisfied gaze. As his foot reached the lowest step his hand rested on the shoulder of one whose quiet smile, as he assisted the Cavalier's slight stumble, and whose scriptural admonition to 'take heed lest he fall,' were characteristic of the confidence and self-dependence of his party, a confidence based upon things not of this world, a self-dependence peculiar to those who are persuaded that 'God is on their side.'

He was a low square-built man, with wide shoulders and deep chest, all the appearance of physical strength, without which solid foundation the finest moral structure is too apt to crumble to the ground. His wide forehead, prominent about the temples, from which the thin iron grey hair receded daily more and more, denoted that ideal organization which can derive from *Belief* as full a satisfaction as coarser natures can from *knowledge*, whilst the broad cheek and firm wide jaw could only belong to one whose unconquerable resolution would prompt him to suffer for the Right, ay, even unto death, without yielding a hair's-breadth of his tenets, or giving way an inch

in his argument. His deep-set eye of light grey, shaded beneath a pair of bushy eyebrows, glittered in the torchlight with a ray of enthusiasm such as those alone experience who live more in the inner than the outer life, and his smile as he greeted Effingham was calm, and even melancholy, as that of one who had done with the empty vanities of the world, but paid his tribute to its courtesies, as one who rendered, though somewhat grudgingly, 'unto Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's.'

He was dressed in a suit of the darkest hues, and simplest cut, with high riding-boots drawn midway up the leg; his narrow band was of the plainest and coarsest linen, and he wore neither lace neckerchief nor ruffles, nor any such vanities, to relieve the sameness of his attire. A strong buff belt, however, about his waist contained a pair of serviceable pistols, and a long straight cut-and-thrust sword completed the equipment of one who was never unwilling to carry out the promptings of the spirit with the arm of the flesh. A black skull-cap sat close round his head, the closer that, in accordance with an inhuman decree of the Star Chamber, he had lost both his ears, and the contemptuous epithets applied to his party by the Cavaliers bore with him a cruelly-appropriate signification. It was an ignoble punishment, and yet who can withhold admiration from the Spartan constancy of the martyr? A shouting populace, ready as the 'many-headed monster thing' ever is, to heap obloquy and insult on those delivered over to its tender mercies, are pelting with rotten eggs and dead cats, and other filthy missiles, the helpless sufferer

who has been subjected to the pillory for his political opinions. Does it exact no resolution, no constancy, none of that British quality for which we have no other word than *pluck*, to sustain the jeers, the violence, the aggravated insults of a mob? Yet the victim never quails nor winces. Erect and defiant he faces them all, and faces them the more creditably that his position is, to say the least of it, ridiculous as well as painful. So the officers of justice release him from the pillory, to usher him up a flight of steps on to a wooden stage, where stands a brazier, a table with a volume lying thereon, and an ominous-looking figure in a mask, armed with a long knife. Here must he recant his heresies, burn with his own hands the book he has written to support them, or sustain the full amount of punishment awarded for his misdemeanour by the collective wisdom of Church and State. Again the light gleams from his eye, the inner light that, in the infancy of faith, illumined the face of Stephen 'as it had been the face of an angel.' Again the head is reared erect, and a proud refusal hurled in the very teeth of judges and executioner. What though the quivering hand must be branded, and the cruel red-hot iron seethe and scorch into the hissing flesh? Not a groan escapes the martyr, and he raises the mutilated member as a testimony in the face of earth and heaven. But the penalty is not yet exacted—the sickening ceremony not yet over; merciless as the Red Man's tomahawk, the bright steel flashes round his head. The red blood flows free and fast, and a punishment degrading but for the offence of which it is the award, con-

cludes, amidst the shudders and disgust of the spectators, moved from their previous brutality by the courage and constancy of the determined sufferer.

Such an ordeal had Effingham's neighbour but lately undergone. Who shall say that forgiveness for his enemies formed one of the petitions he seemed so fervently and abstractedly to offer up?

He was a specimen of the highest order of those enthusiasts who, under the progressive denominations of Independents, Brownists, and Fifth-Monarchy Men, deluged England with blood for conscience' sake, and eventually by their fanaticism effected the Restoration of that very dynasty which they deemed synonymous with Antichrist and sin.

All fanatics, however, were not necessarily martyrs, nor indeed by any means willing to become so. Another step as he shifted his position brought Effingham in contact with a worthy of a far different calibre, and one whose outward demeanour as it savoured of the extreme of sanctity, was but little in character, to use his own favourite expression, with the 'carnal self-seeking of the inner man.' He was a fat unctuous-looking personage, with a broad flat face, to which the lank shining hair was plastered with grave precision, and on the surface of which a stereotyped expression of hypocritical gravity accorded ill with the humorous twinkle of the eye and the sensual curve of the thick full lip. Though his garments were of the darkest colour and the plainest workmanship, they fitted closely round a plump well-fed figure such as argued no mean appreciation of the good things of this world; and while in accordance with the exigencies of the times, he wore a long

straight sword in his belt, the weapon was dull and badly cleaned; and balanced on the other side by a huge clasped Bible, hung with no small amount of ostentation, and continually referred to on the most trivial occasions by the wearer.

Sanctimonious in his demeanour, wresting the words of Scripture to the meanest and most practical affairs of daily life, his religion was but a cloak of convenience and affectation, under which a course of self-indulgence could be carried on with the greater security and satisfaction. A man of peace by profession, his calling absolved him from the dangers of bearing arms in the civil war; a man of God, as he impiously termed himself, his assumed sanctity forbade suspicion and remark. One of the elect in his own estimation, he could indulge his sensual vices unchecked, and, as he strove to persuade himself, unpunished; and lastly, though but an atom in his own proper person, as a component part of that mighty body which was then shaking England to her very foundations, he enjoyed a sense of power and self-aggrandizement inexpressibly dear to the aspiring vanity of a selfish and ignoble nature.

Such were the extreme types of the Puritan party, and of every shade and grade between the two—from the high devoted martyr to the base and cowardly hypocrite—was that powerful faction constituted which overturned the dynasty of the Stuarts, which recruited Cromwell's Ironsides, and sent its dogged representatives to the Rump Parliament, which raised the son of a Lincolnshire grazier to the throne of Britain, and then, bursting asunder like a shell from

its own internal violence, after fulfilling its deadly mission, and shedding rivers of the best and noblest blood in England, recalled the son of the very sovereign whose head it had taken on the block, and handed over the country whose liberties it had saved to the mal-administration of a good-natured profligate, who inherited not one of the high and generous qualities that had cost his misguided father life and crown.

Effingham's entrance, we have said, caused a momentary stir and excitement amongst the congregation, but it soon relapsed into the deep and mystical silence which had pervaded it before his arrival. To all appearance the members were absorbed in inward prayer, and an occasional sigh or broken interjection of more than common vehemence denoted the strength and fervency of their devotions. There were no women present, and the general aspect of the men was stern, preoccupied, and forbidding; yet the Cavalier officer could not but remark that a feeling of deep though unexpressed satisfaction pervaded every countenance when a loud sonorous cough and the rustling of a Bible's leaves heralded the principal event of the meeting—a discourse upon those topics of religion and politics which, when mingled together, afford such stimulating food to the appetites of those who hunger for excitement as for their daily bread. How strange it is, how suggestive of man's fallen state, how disheartening, how humiliating, to reflect that meek-eyed Religion—she whose 'ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace'—should so often have been perverted to excuse the worst and

fiercest passions of our nature, should have been made the mask of vice and the cloak of cruelty, should have been so disguised as to lead her votaries to the commission of nearly every crime that can most degrade and brutalize a man! A few of the oldest and gravest of the assemblage now cleared a space around a high-backed chair which had hitherto stood unoccupied, and a pale thin man, on whose brow the sweat stood in large drops, and whose attenuated features seemed wasted with the inner workings of the spirit, whilst his glittering eye assumed a wild gleam not far removed from insanity, mounted this temporary pulpit and looked proudly around him with the commanding air of an orator who is sure of his own powers and the favourable attention of his audience. The light from a neighbouring torch gleamed upon Caryl's high pale forehead, and brought into bold relief the intellectual cast of his head and face, and the contour of his spare nervous figure, while the deep cavernous eyes flashed out from their recesses with a brilliancy that had in it something more than human. Careless, almost squalid in his attire, no weapon of fleshly warfare glittered by his side; but those white trembling fingers clasped the holy book with an energy and a grasp that seemed to say, 'this is my sword and my shield, my helmet and my breastplate, the weapon with which I can smite or heal, can destroy or save, can confound an army or hurl a sovereign from his throne;' and while he turned over its leaves with rapid and nervous eagerness, a deep 'hum' of satisfaction and approval resounded from the

grim, stern, defiant casuists that constituted his audience.

For a minute or so he stood erect, his eyes closed, his lips set tight, but the muscles of his face twitching and working with the strength of his emotions, as he wrapped his soul in the garment of silent and enthusiastic prayer; then swooping from his high-wrought pitch and pouncing as it were on a text from the holy volume which quivered in his hand, he plunged at once into such a discourse as suited his own excited and transcendental imagination no less than the fierce and dogmatic appetites of his congregation.

'My brethren,' he began in a low and tremulous voice, which gradually as he warmed with his subject rose into loud sonorous tones, clear and commanding as a trumpet-peal, 'my famished brethren, hungering and thirsting after the truth, whom the minister of the Word must nourish, as the pelican in the wilderness nourisheth her brood with the life-blood of her own devoted breast. My brethren, who look to me for bread as the children of Israel looked to Moses in the days of their wanderings, when manna fell from heaven plenteous as the night-dews and "man did eat angels' food," who cry to me with parched lips and fainting souls for water even as the people of God cried to their leader on the arid plains of Rephidim, and chid him to his face for that there was no water and they must die—what would ye here with me? Am I Moses, to stand between you and the Lord? Is this place Sin, between Elim and Sinai, that the dew from heaven should fall upon it as

bread, white, like coriander seed, with a pleasant taste as that of wafers and wild honey? Is there here a rock like Horeb from whence should flow living waters that ye might drink and be satisfied, and depart rejoicing on your way? I trow not. Even as the defilement of Sodom, so is the defilement of Oxford; even as the punishment of Gomorrah, so shall be the fate of this accursed town! Peradventure there may be ten righteous men in the city, yet it may be that to-day the city shall not be saved for ten righteous men's sake. And now again, what would ye here with me? Silver and gold have I none, yet such as I have will I freely bestow upon you.' He paused, wiped his brow, opened the Bible as if at random, yet a close observer might have remarked there was a leaf turned backward to mark the page, and hurried on. "I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish." It is not Caryl, my brethren, who speaks to you now—poor persecuted Caryl, scoffed at and reviled by Malignants, beaten with stripes, outraged by men of blood, and brought here into Oxford manacled and guarded, with his feet tied under a horse's belly. No; Caryl's voice is weak and small, his frame is feeble, and his spirit faint, but this is the voice of prophecy, loud as the shouts of an army, clear as the trumpet-peal in the day of battle—a prophecy that shall not fail the children at their need, a prophecy that is even now working out its own fulfilment, a prophecy that shall avenge us of our enemies and put

to shame them that despitefully use us and persecute us. Who is the inhabitant of Ashdod—who is he that holdeth the sceptre in Ashkelon? Hath not Ekron deserved punishment, and shall the Philistines not perish like the very dogs by the wayside? Hearken unto me, and I will expound to you the interpretation thereof; ask your own hearts and they shall respond, even as the strings of a lute respond to the skilful fingers of the player. The inhabitant of Ashdod is he that cometh from afar to despoil the children of the congregation, to defile the holy places with his horses' hoofs, to work out his appointed portion of wickedness here, and receive his reward from the master whom he serves hereafter. Who is the bitterest enemy of the chosen people? Who is the merciless wolf that ravens round the sheepfolds in the wilderness to rend the lamb from the shepherd and lap the warm blood of the innocent? Who is he that rideth upon horses through the slaughter, and halteth to drink strong drink, and ravisheth the poor and the fatherless? whose flesh shall be torn by eagles in the day of battle, and his proud head laid low in the dust beneath the heel of his enemies? I wot ye know him well, the man of war from his youth upward, the spawn of her of Bohemia, whose words, like Jezebel's, are ever, "Take, take!—slay, slay!" and whose latter end shall be even as the latter end of Ahab's godless queen. Ye have seen him in his power and the pride of his might. Ye have fronted him, armed with the sword of the Lord and of Gideon; ye have turned him back, though he came on at the head of his men of war like the whirlwind

that sweeps everything before it save the rampart whose foundations are in the living rock; and ye have seen the weapons of Satan shivered upon the panoply of Truth. But ye shall see mightier works than these; ye shall see vengeance for the anointed, and the inhabitant of Ashdod cut off, and the wicked Rupert stretched like Sisera upon the earth, and his horses and his horsemen scattered like chaff before the wind in the triumph of the children of the congregation.'

A deep hum of applause here greeted the preacher, whose *argumentum ad hominem* met with the usual success of such appeals in popular assemblies. Many an eye was turned with looks of mingled triumph and curiosity on Effingham, whose interest, although externally he appeared unmoved, was powerfully awakened, and whose whole attention was riveted on Caryl as he resumed his discourse.

'And what of him that holdeth the sceptre in Ashkelon? Shall he escape the vengeance of the pursuer, and yet abuse the trust that hath been confided to him by God and man? Shall he break the strong fence of the vineyard, and trample down the vines and the wild grapes, and shall not the thorns rend his garments and pierce his feet, and justice overtake him, and his inheritance pass from him and know him no more? Hath not London been visited by the pestilence that walketh at noonday?—and is not Oxford like the scorpion's nest, which nourisheth only evil, and calleth aloud to be purged and cleansed from its iniquity by the hand of the avenger of blood, who maketh no long tarrying? He who hath ruled

over Ashkelon should have swayed a righteous sceptre, and done justice between man and man, leaving to Naboth his vineyard and to the poor his ewe lamb; but a hand hath held the scales, and the man Charles hath been found wanting. An eye hath meted out the measure, and hath seen that it is short, so the sceptre shall be taken away, and he that holdeth it shall be cut off, and Ashkelon shall acknowledge no human sovereign, for the fire that is sent upon Judah shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and a new kingdom shall be raised up—a structure not built with hands, imperishable and unfading, the true vineyard of which ye alone shall gather the vintage who are steadfast to the end—a Commonwealth of the Saints who shall inherit the earth, and have dominion here below, and own no lord and master save only the Lord of Hosts, whose servants and whose soldiers ye are. Will ye work in the heat of the noonday for wages such as these? Will ye run with the swift for so noble a prize, and do battle with the strong, ankle-deep in blood, to obtain so glorious a victory? I trow ye will; the voice within me calls ye to the fight, and ye shall smite and spare not; and he that attaineth to the end the same shall have his reward.'

Once more the preacher paused, once more there was a deep stir amongst his audience—a murmur of suppressed approbation, and then the solemn silence of profound attention. His eye was turned full upon Effingham now, and with the tact of a practised orator who intuitively recognises a convert, he seemed to address his discourse more particularly to the Cavalier.

“I will turn mine hand against Ekron,” and what is Ekron that it shall prevail against the hand of the Lord? Hath Ekron a talisman that shall insure her from pestilence and famine, from the hunger that wasteth the cheek, and the dead-sickness that eateth the heart away? Are her walls loftier, her defences stronger than those of Jericho, which crumbled into dust at the trumpet-blast of the hosts of Israel? Hath she men of war that shall stand against Joshua, or a Goliath in whom she trusteth for her champion against the soldiers of the truth? Even now is the young David herding his flocks who shall overthrow the boast of the heathen, even now is the running water smoothing the pebble that shall sink into the forehead of the Philistine, and bring his gigantic frame, ringing in its armour, to the ground. Shall Ekron stand, though her garner be filled with provender and her arsenals stored with arms? Though she be garrisoned by cruel Lunsford, who hath sold himself to Satan that he may work deeds of blood, slaughtering the faithful at their very prayers, and burning their churches to light him on his own journey to the bottomless pit, where his Master awaiteth him with his wages; and reckless profligate Goring, who hath made a present of his soul to the devil, and refused for aught so valueless to accept any guerdon in exchange; and hoary Colepepper, on whose forehead is set the mark of the beast, graven to the bone by the godly sword-stroke of one of the troopers of the faithful; and zealous Lucas, who serveth the darkness rather than the light, and who verily shall have his reward; and

Astley, the high priest of Baal, whose head is white with many winters, and who gnasheth with his teeth upon the prophets, and cutteth himself with knives, and calleth upon his gods to do him justice in the fore-front of the battle, as one who weariech of his life, and who knoweth not of that which is to come; and Rupert, with his magic and his witchcraft, his familiar spirit, and his spells of the black art,—who eateth the substance of the faithful, and dasheth their children against the stones—shall his magic save him in the day of vengeance? Shall the devil, in whom he trusteth, shield him from the out-stretched arm and the consuming fire? Though the evil spirit hath entered into the body of a white dog,* and in that shape watcheth over him, as well ye know, in the battle and the leaguer, in the camp and the council chamber, summer and winter, day and night, yet shall the time come at length that it shall turn and rend him; and the latter end of the sorcerer shall be worse than the beginning. And shall men of war such as these save Ekron from the fate that is hanging over her? or shall councillors whose wisdom is vanity, or priests who worship false gods, and at the

* A well-known favourite that accompanied Rupert wherever he went, and was stated by the Puritans to be a wizard or familiar spirit, furnished by the prince of darkness, to whom he had sold himself, as an auxiliary in council and a defence in the field. Many years later a famous black charger of John Grahame of Claverhouse, afterwards 'bonnie Dundee,' enjoyed the same unenviable notoriety. The Prince's favourite died a soldier's death at Marston Moor, where he was shot with many a nobler but not more faithful Cavalier.

best are but whited sepulchres, be a bulwark to stem the wrath of the Avenger? I trow not. Ekron shall fall with a crash that shall shake the land to its extremities, and shall bury in her downfall the false prophets who have reared her, and the councillors who have counselled evil in her palaces, and the men of blood who have defended her on her ramparts, and the daughters of Sin who have made mirth and revelry in her halls, and the Sovereign who hath forsaken his faith and abused his trust upon his throne. On her ruins shall be erected a new Jerusalem, another kingdom, of which no mortal head shall wear the crown; of which ye, the faithful and the abiding, shall be the princes and the peers, the priests and the senators, reigning upon earth in the radiant glory of those whose garments have been cleansed in the washing of blood, and purified by the ordeal of fire. Will ye triumph over your enemies, and spurn beneath your feet him whose chariot-wheels have passed over your necks and crushed your children to the earth?—stand to your arms and believe! Will ye win the dominion here below, to the confusion of your enemies and the saving of your own souls?—stand to your arms and believe! Will ye work out the task that has been predestined for you in the dark womb of Eternity, to be born in the fulness of time, and attain its maturity in the glowing splendour of an everlasting Future? Will ye be princes and potentates on earth, and glorified saints in heaven, again I say unto you, Stand to your arms and believe!—so shall ye scatter your enemies, as the chaff from the threshing-floor is scattered to the four winds of heaven, and “the rem-

nant of the Philistines shall perish." The Philistines ! the accursed Philistines ! whom ye have fought and resisted day by day ; whose squadrons ye have heard thundering on the plain, and seen charging and forming, and charging again, to shatter themselves and fall back from your goodly stand of pikes, even as the baffled breakers of the advancing tide from the bluff face of the opposing rock. The Philistines ! who would fain make ye their bond-slaves and their victims ; who would ravish from ye your substance, and rob ye of your souls, yet whom ye shall despoil of their silver and gold, the needlework that they prize, and the armour in which they trust ; whose maidens ye shall make captives to your bow and spear, and on the neck of whose great ones ye, the soldiers of the congregation, shall set your foot.

'And who is he that would have his portion with the doomed remnant ? Who is he that would cast in his lot with the servants of darkness, and serve in that troop whose captain is the Prince of the Power of the Air ? Who would go up against the armies of the Lord to the battle of Armageddon, in that great day when the hosts of heaven shall join in conflict with the children of men ; when a voice louder than thunder on the mountains shall peal above the tramp of thousands, the clashing of arms, the rush of many wings, the hosannas of the conquering righteous, and the ghastly shrieks of the vanquished and the doomed, saying, "Who is on my side?"' When darkness shall cover the face of the heavens at noonday, and the earth shall quake for very fear, and amongst all her myriads

the children of the congregation alone shall be saved, who would have his portion on that day with the remnant of the Philistines? Behold, there is yet an eleventh hour. Behold, there is yet a ray of light in the utter darkness—a chink left open in the narrow gate. Ye that are bidden to the feast come hastily, ere the door be shut. Ye that would save yourselves and your households, bind your sandals on your feet, lift up your burdens, rise and go on your way. Again, it is not I, poor John Caryl, that speaketh to you. It is the Voice that cannot lie. Believe not me; believe the Voice. It prophesieth to you; it warneth you, it entreateth you, it commandeth you. This is the way that leadeth to salvation; this is the way that leadeth to righteousness; this is the way that leadeth to everlasting glory. Turn ye! turn ye! why *will ye die?*'

The preacher concluded with almost a shriek of entreaty. His face was deadly pale, and as he stretched his arms towards George Effingham there was a wild appealing glance in those deep mournful eyes—a glance, as it were, of angelic pity and tenderness, that went straight to the Cavalier's heart. He sank into the chair on which he had been standing, apparently exhausted by his oratory. A deep hum of applause, mingled with more open expressions of approbation, greeted the conclusion of his sermon; and the congregation, as they departed stealthily and silently, in twos and threes, to their respective homes, congratulated each other in their strange Scriptural parlance on the 'crumbs of comfort' they had received, 'the draughts of living water' which had

slaked their thirst, and the 'crowning mercy of such a brand being snatched from the burning' as the Cavalier officer who had joined in their devotions, and whose conversion they deemed as good as completed by the attention and interest with which he had listened to their favourite preacher.

'The Brand' himself was one of the last to leave the vault. The concluding words of the sermon he had just heard seemed to ring on his ears; the wild, eager, imploring face to be still before his eyes. 'Why *will* ye die?' The appeal seemed at once so appropriate and so natural, the admonition so friendly, the warning so well-timed. It was the spark to the train of gunpowder, the corner-stone to the edifice, the appeal to the feelings where the Reason had long ago been satisfied. Effingham had been for months a Puritan from conviction; he was now, as he was forced to confess to himself, a Roundhead and a rebel at his heart.

As he ascended the steps leading from the vault into the shop, an arm was thrust under his own, and looking round he discovered that the only remaining individual of the congregation was about to depart in his company, and signified his intention of so doing in this somewhat unceremonious manner. It was the same person who had stood next him on his first entrance, and whose mutilated head bore so fearful a witness to the sincerity of his professions. 'You may trust me,' said he abruptly, and without any further apology or explanation; 'I am a friend and brother. I can read your soul, young man; and you are *with* us, though not *of* us. "The voice is

Jacob's voice, though the hands are the hands of Esau." I marked you when the shepherd invited you to the flock; and I cannot be deceived. Will you cast in your lot with the children of the congregation?"

Contrary to his wont, Effingham felt confused, and so to speak, taken by surprise at this sudden reading of his inmost feelings by a thorough stranger. He could not but acknowledge that they were interpreted aright; yet his bold, masculine mind shrank from the avowal that his actual sentiments were so opposed to the profession he had adopted, nay, to the very clothes he wore. A blush, half of eagerness, half of shame, clothed his bronzed features as he replied, 'I would fain see a more righteous party at the head of affairs. I would fain see a Godly Government, and a people living in peace and morality, and the enjoyment of civil as well as religious liberty. But I am a soldier of the Crown; I bear the King's commission; what am I to do? And yet,' he added abstractedly, and more as it were to himself than to his companion, 'I have often thought ere this that Heaven is not on our side.'

'Can you doubt it?' eagerly urged the stranger, his features lighting up with enthusiasm and excitement. 'Can you doubt that He whom we serve takes care of his own? Am not I myself a living instance of his providence and his mercy? Have I not survived the degradation of the pillory, despising the shame, and endured the torment, regardless of the pain, in looking for the martyr's crown—the crown that shall be doubly set with brilliants because of this

mutilated head? Listen to me, George Effingham. I know you well, and I have watched you long. It was to snatch you like a brand from the burning that I ventured here into Oxford, into the very camp and stronghold of my enemies, and I will save you from destruction—save you for that my heart yearneth towards you as doth a mother's towards her first-born. They took me prisoner as I neared the godless city, and bound me on one of their war-horses, and brought me into their guard-rooms; and mocked me in the ribaldry of their mirth; and I was dumb, and spake not. Then did one of their captains, a young and well-favoured Malignant, whom the soldiers accosted with the blasphemous title of Lord Francis, take pity on me, and bade his men of war to scourge me, and let me go. "Verily the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." I was stripped and bound to their accursed halberds; and two sons of Belial, tall and strong, and stimulated with strong drink, were appointed for my executioners, when the young Malignant again interposed, and I was suffered to depart, an object of derision and scorn, and cruel mockery, which I pray may not be visited on my persecutors in another world. Then did I flee to the vault in which we met, athirst for the living water, of which to-night we have both drunk freely, and yet not athirst for myself alone. It was borne in upon me that he for whom I have prayed and wrestled would be there too, and I found him for whom I looked seeking his portion with the children of the congregation. Verily, my prayers have been answered. Verily, the truth hath prevailed; and now will not

you, George Effingham, cast in your lot with the elect for time and for eternity?’

They had already reached the street, and were pacing thoughtfully along in the moonlight. One solitary figure walked slowly on before them. It was the preacher; his head bent down, his whole being wrapped in meditation. They neared him rapidly, and were in the act of passing him when Effingham replied to the fervent appeal of his companion:—

‘Could I do it with honour, I would shake to-morrow the very dust of the Court from off my feet. And yet what is earthly honour compared to eternal life? My friend!—if indeed you are my friend—I have never sought counsel yet from mortal man. I ask it now in my present strait, in the agony of my doubts. Are ye not too rash—too violent? Is there no possibility of saving our country, ay, and our religion, without bloodshed? Must we be all at each other’s throats, in the name of peace and goodwill? Counsel me, I pray, for I am sorely distracted even to the very harrowing of my soul.’

The stranger looked at him with a satisfied air. ‘The seed has fallen on good ground,’ he muttered; ‘let it remain there and fructify.’ Then added aloud, ‘I will talk with you again on these matters. The night is now far advanced. To-morrow I will seek you at your own quarters. I know where you lie; fear not, George Effingham, I will be with you in secret and unobserved.’

With these words, he turned up a bye-street, and was soon out of sight, leaving Effingham a few paces in advance of the preacher, who now walked quietly

up to him, laid his hand on the young man's shoulder, and looking into his face once more with the same wild, imploring, mournful glance, whispered in his ear, 'He that is not with me is against me. Turn ye, turn ye: why *will* ye die?' And he, too, disappeared like some unearthly vision that leaves behind it only a feeling of dread uncertainty and supernatural fear.

Effingham paced on, absorbed in meditation. With a strong sense of religion, that wanted but the stimulus of suffering and a consciousness of oppression to be fanned into the flame of fanaticism, he likewise entertained the feelings of a soldier on the point of honour and the sacred duty of remaining staunch to the banner under which he had once enlisted. It was a conflict that tore and vexed the strong man's mind to the verge of madness. Combining a wild and dreamy enthusiasm with keen reasoning powers, the imagination of a poet with the acute perspicuity of a logician, his was a nature above all others calculated to suffer from religious doubts, appreciating as it did, on the one hand, the importance of the subject, and on the other, the probability of error, where error was fatal and irremediable. He longed for the solitude of his own chamber, there to compose his powerful mind, and draw his own conclusions, uninterrupted and alone; and he never greeted his friend Bosville with so inhospitable a welcome, as when he found him installed in that bare apartment which he had hoped was to afford him a refuge for the solitary meditation he required.

'What *have* you been doing?' exclaimed Hum-

phrey, grasping his friend's hand with a cordiality which had in it something ominously suggestive of a desire for advice or assistance. 'Where *have* you been spending the livelong night? I trust you have employed it better than I have. I have been waiting here for hours to see you; and have read through the whole of that blundering tactician's work without understanding a word of it. George, I'm in a devil of a scrape, and I want you to see me through it!'

'A woman, of course,' answered Effingham, jumping, at once, like the rest of mankind, to the most charitable conclusion. 'Oh, Humphrey! I thought you knew better. I thought that even in Oxford you were too good to be lured like a kestrel by the flutter of a petticoat or the flirt of a fan. Young one, I'm ashamed of you!'

'Nay,' replied Humphrey, 'it's not so bad as that. Hear me. I've got into a quarrel, and we must fight it out according to the laws of the duello, and I want you to be one of my witnesses on the occasion. The worst of it is, it's with Goring, and you see he is the general of our division.'

Effingham drew a long breath, as if inexpressibly relieved. 'With Goring?' said he, 'and you know he's the best swordsman in the Royal army. Must you always fly at the highest game on the wing? Well, well, go thy ways, Humphrey; for a quiet amiable lad with far too much mother's milk still left in his constitution, thou certainly hast an inordinate liking for the whistle of hot lead, and the clink of cold steel. Nevertheless, if we *must* fight him, we *must*; and

though it's contrary to my principles, and I had rather you had pick'd a quarrel with any one of them, except Lunsford, who has brought back a curious thrust in tierce from amongst the Puritans, that they boast no Royalist can parry, yet I cannot leave thee, lad, in the lurch. So open that cupboard, where you will find a flask of mine host's canary, and a couple of tall glasses; and let me know all about it. In the first place, hast got the length of his weapon?' Truly, the human mind, like the chameleon, takes its colouring from surrounding objects. A few minutes ago, and George Effingham was pondering deeply upon no less important a subject than his soul's salvation: behold him now, at the spell of a few words, busily engaged in planning a *combat à l'outrance* between his dearest friend and his superior officer. So the young men filled their glasses and measured off the length of their weapons, and sat till daybreak arranging the preliminaries of the duel.

CHAPTER XIV.

MAN TO MAN.

MORNING broke with a thick fog, highly favourable to those who meditated such an undertaking as that of Bosville and his friend. Notwithstanding the licence and immorality which pervaded the Court, and which the so-called laws of honour scarce restrained within the bounds of common decency, Charles, in a fit of conscientiousness, had issued a most stringent order against the practice of duelling, and had threatened to inflict the punishment of mutilation by the loss of the right hand on any who should be found bold enough to transgress in this point—nay, under aggravated circumstances the penalty of death was to be exacted from the principals in the transaction. Such a state of things was not calculated to inspire with confidence the anxious belligerent who found himself thus hemmed in by a variety of evils, of which it was scarcely possible for him to decide on choosing the least. The alternative of being scouted for a coward, or run through an empty stomach in the early morning, is sufficiently unpleasant, without the further aggravation of a gallops in perspective, should superior ‘cunning of fence’ or strength of body enable the successful combatant to turn the tables on his adversary; and

it is no wonder that Bosville wrapped himself in his cloak with a chill consciousness that the misty autumnal morning was more than usually raw and lowering, and a sort of dismal foreboding that the tufts of wet grass beneath his feet, saturated with the night dews, might prove a very cold and uncomfortable resting-place after some half a dozen passes with the keenest rapier in the Royal army.

Perhaps it may have been reflections such as these which caused the young officer to hum a loyal air, expressive of great devotion to his Majesty, a trifle louder than common, and to reply to his companion's eager inquiries with a little more than his usual gaiety and carelessness, though to do him justice every note was in tune, and his manner though excited was as courteous and kindly as ever. Mist or sunshine, up or down, in his stirrups on the good sorrel, or on his back amongst the wet grass, there was no *white feather* about Humphrey Bosville.

He and Effingham were first upon the ground. It was a secluded spot at all times, and in a fog impervious at a hundred yards, offered every appearance of uninterrupted seerisy. A meadow some two acres square, surrounded by a high blackthorn hedge not yet denuded of its leaves by the early frosts, and teeming with hips and haws and huge ripe blackberries, overshadowed moreover by a deep close copse of hazels, in which the nuts were ripening and the birds fluttering, and the quiet hares stealing about to crop the rank wet herbage, was no likely place for intruders at that early hour. A flat surface of thick, smooth turf afforded an excellent foothold for the combatants, and

a distant farm-house, from which, although its buildings were themselves unseen, the lowing of cows, the cackling of fowls, and other bucolic sounds were distinctly audible, promised shelter and assistance in the event of fatal consequences to the lawless *rencontre*. The two Cavaliers looked about them, wrapped themselves closer in their cloaks, and walked to and fro, making foot tracks in the wet grass to keep themselves warm.

‘I like a short blade best, after all,’ quoth George Effingham, after a few minutes of deep cogitation, during which he had been perfectly silent, and his principal had hummed the same bars of his song over and over again. ‘I like a short blade best against a delicate fighter. You must force Goring to close quarters, Humphrey, as soon as you can.’

‘A short blade on foot, a long one on horseback,’ answered his friend sententiously, and then relapsed into a profound silence. It was evident there was something on the minds of both foreign to the question of *carte and tierce*, and thrust and parry, and all the jargon of polite murder.

‘Not here yet,’ observed Effingham, once more peering through the fog on the look-out for the enemy. ‘Zounds, Humphrey, I must speak out, lad! Thou and I are no two raw fledglings to keep up an affectation of courage by pretending to ignore the presence of danger. Young as thou art I have seen thee tried, and I know thy mettle, man—ay, as well as I know my own sword. ’Twas but yesterday, so to speak, we held the old farm-house against Ireton’s pikes, and we’ve had many a ride together after Waller

before our last affair at Newbury. Look ye here, lad; Goring's a good blade. He's always in practice, and he's got a trick of turning his wrist down and coming in here just under your elbow that has put many a tall fellow on the grass. You may get it in a queer place, Humphrey—mind, I don't say you will. Is there anything I can do for you, lad, any last word I can carry, if you should go back feet foremost into Oxford?'

Bosville's face brightened considerably. He pressed his friend's hand as he replied,

'I have been thinking of it all the morning, George, but it wasn't for me, you know, to begin on such a subject. I don't mind running my chance any more than my neighbours; and somehow, though my life has become dearer to me in the last twenty-four hours than it ever was before, yet I feel as if I could lose it contentedly and happily too. There is one favour you can do me, George, and that I would entrust to no man alive but yourself; one that I would only entrust to you at a moment like the present. George, I can depend upon you, I know. Give me your hand again.'

Effingham shook him cordially by the hand. 'Name it,' he said; 'if I'm alive I'll fulfil it for you.'

'Tis but a few words, a short message to deliver,' replied Bosville, with a smile that softened his whole face. 'If I fall, and *only* if I fall, seek out a lady in the Court—you have never seen her, but you know her by name—it is—it is Mistress Mary Cave' (he blushed and hesitated when he mentioned her name); 'give her a glove you will find in my doublet, and tell

her that I could not as a gentleman avoid this foolish quarrel, and that I regretted it chiefly because I had wished to devote my life wholly and exclusively to my Sovereign. Tell her I have not forgotten what she said to me; that I repeated with my last breath, "Loyalty before all!" And now, my dear Effingham, promise me that *you* will not fight if you can help it. It is a foolish custom, and leads to no good that the seconds should be involved in the quarrel of their principals. Do me this favour—promise me this, quick!—here they come.'

Even while he spoke two Cavaliers, cloaked and wrapped up like Humphrey and Effingham, loomed through the fog as they surmounted the stile which gave them admittance at one angle of the orchard. They were talking and laughing loudly. It seemed they had neither regard for consequences nor fear of detection. It was the fashion of the day to affect a haughty carelessness of bloodshed, and to look upon a duel as a pleasant opportunity for the interchange of lively sallies and jocose remarks.

Indeed, until the late Royal edict it had been the practice for each of the original combatants to appear upon the ground attended by two, three, sometimes even as many as four assistants, chosen as a mark of the deepest respect amongst his own intimate friends. As these gentlemen esteemed it a high point of honour and an unspeakable privilege to engage their points with each other on their own accounts, and totally irrespective of the quarrel of their principals, it would sometimes happen that ten couples of reasoning beings, hitherto constant associates and sworn friends, would be doing

battle to the death upon such weighty question of dispute as the length of a lady's eyelashes or the colour of her breast-knots. Now, however, the threats of death and mutilation issued from the Council, and which extended to all concerned in a duel, whether principals or witnesses, had somewhat damped the ardour of the Royalists for this particular amusement, and Goring had considered himself sufficiently befriended by the single presence of his worthless associate, wicked Tom Lunsford, on whose arm he leaned heavily as he approached the ground, limping along with an affectation of more than his usual lameness, probably with the view of enhancing his adversary's astonishment at the activity which he would too surely display when stripped and with steel in his hand.

He doffed his hat till its plume swept the grass, with a bow of supreme courtesy to his antagonist, who returned the salute with equally studied politeness; it being scrupulously exacted by the laws of arms that the duellist should assume an attitude of the most deferential humility towards the individual whose blood he proposed to shed, whilst to all else on the ground it was considered good taste to behave with a boisterous cordiality bordering upon the jocose. Goring, too, was in the best of humours, for in addition to the natural gratification which he derived from all scenes of this kind, he had passed the two or three previous hours much to his own satisfaction in imbibing burnt canary, and as it was too late to go to bed, in flinging a quiet main or two with his second, which resulted, as usual, in his winning largely. True, Tom Lunsford would never pay him; but still

there was the prestige of success, and he now proposed himself the pleasure of running Bosville gracefully through the body, as an appropriate wind-up to his night's amusement and preparation for his day's duties and interview on business with the King.

'I fear we have kept you waiting, Captain Effingham,' he remarked, with a cordial greeting to that gentleman, for Goring knew every officer in his division, and his private pursuits and habits, better than those who only observed the surface of the general's character would have supposed. 'My lameness must be my excuse, though Tom and I have hurried hither as fast as we could. Lunsford, let me present to you Captain George Effingham, with whom, if you mean to try any of your cursed Puritan tricks, you will meet with your match, for he has been with the crop-cars later than yourself.'

Effingham started and coloured violently; his last night's visit was then known—and to Goring! What if he should be denounced, seized, examined as a traitor? perhaps lose his life without striking another blow on either side. For a moment he forgot the duel and all about it. The image of Caryl and his martyr-friend rose upon his mind. What would those good men think of him now—what was he even now about to do? Nevertheless habit, as it always is, was too strong for conscience: he manned himself with an effort, returned Goring's malicious leer with a haughty though respectful stare, and saluted Sir Thomas Lunsford with the punctilious politeness due to one whose sword-point might probably that morning be at his throat. The latter, with a facetious remark anent the

coldness of the weather, and a wish expressed with much unction, for a cup of burnt sack, produced a small piece of tape from beneath his cloak, and proceeded to measure with it the swords of the combatants. 'Right to a barleycorn,' remarked the Cavalier, returning to each the rapier he had borrowed of him with a courteous bow. 'The morning is too raw to waste your time in any further preliminaries, therefore, gentlemen, if you please, we will strip and get to work at once.'

'Hold,' interrupted Effingham, as the duellists stripped to their doublets and hose, first baring their breasts to show that no unfair defences, no secret coat of mail or proof cuirass lurked beneath their garments, took up their positions with watchful eager eyes and bare quivering blades, and an ugly smile on each man's countenance, paler than its wont, though each was brave, and wearing the peculiar set look that may be seen any day on the human face, ay, even in a common street fight, when man is fairly pitted against man. 'Hold, gentlemen; this duel is not to the death. Sir Thomas Lunsford, by your leave we will draw and stand across our men; at the first flesh-wound we can then strike their swords up, and proclaim satisfaction given and received!' As he spoke the two principals lowered their points, but etiquette forbade that either should speak a word: strictly, they ought to have appeared totally unconscious that any remark had been made, but although their ground was taken they had not yet crossed swords and the duel had not begun.

Lunsford laughed loudly as he replied, 'Hardly,

Captain Effingham ; and think what cold work it would be for you and me standing to look on. Besides, sir,' he added, in a graver voice, 'consider the provocation, a blow struck and not returned ! Really, captain, your notions of honour must have been somewhat tarnished amongst your Puritan friends, when you can talk of bringing out four Cavaliers such a long walk on such a damp morning for the mere child's-play you describe. No, sir, we decline anything but the last satisfaction. Be good enough to waste no more time about it, but place your man and begin !'

'Their blood be on their own head!' muttered Effingham, as he advanced to Bosville once more, and, squeezing his hand, placed him on the exact spot which the laws of the duello marked out for him, then casting his cloak and plumed hat upon the ground, drawing his trusty rapier and taking up his own position 'on guard' exactly six paces—the prescribed distance—on the right of his friend, he called upon Lunsford to do likewise, reminding him that 'when a duel is to be fought out to the death, it is incumbent on the seconds to mark their sense of the gravity of the business by engaging themselves,' and adding, with peculiar courtesy, 'I hope Sir Thomas Lunsford will not disappoint me of a lesson in fencing from the best blade now in Oxford.'

'At your service, sir,' replied Sir Thomas Lunsford, who could scarcely refuse to accept so rational an invitation, but whose secret inclinations for a 'pass or two' were but little stimulated by George's square muscular figure, easy attitude of practised

swordsmanship, and dark determined face, on which a remarkably dangerous look was gathering about the brows. As he spoke he also drew, and placed himself in position, and the four men crossed their thirsty blades at the same moment, with the same terrible expression, the family likeness inherited from Cain coming out fierce and ghastly on each forbidding face.

Humphrey Bosville was a young, active man, a complete swordsman, and of a bold determined nature, but he was no match for his antagonist, who, to the confirmed strength of mature manhood, added the ready facility of incessant practice, and the immovable calmness peculiar to his own cold vigilant nature. Man of pleasure, drunkard, debauchee as he was, Goring's passions, however strongly they might be agitated, worked below the surface: nothing ever seemed to shake his nerve or discompose his equanimity. Even now, fighting to the death, an exasperated enemy in his front, and a glittering small-sword thirsting for his blood within a few inches of the laced bosom of his shirt, his eye was as steady, his colour as unvarying, his whole demeanour as cool and insolent, as though he had been standing in the presence-chamber or sitting at the council. In this he had a great advantage over his adversary, who, with all the excitable feelings of youth, became less and less wary as he warmed to his work, and once or twice laid himself open to a thrust that might have put an end to the combat by inflicting on him a pretty smart flesh-wound, such as should incapacitate him from again holding a sword for a while. This, how-

ever, was not Goring's object. In a conversation with his second on their way to the ground, he had laid a bet of ten gold pieces that he would run his antagonist through the body without himself receiving a scratch, and he had made up his mind to do so by bringing into play a thrust in tierce for which he was celebrated, and which if unskilfully parried was a certainty. This deadly manœuvre, however, to be successfully carried out, demanded a very exact measurement of space, so, while Humphrey attacked fiercely again and again with all the impetuous ardour of his disposition, the more practised duellist lunged and parried and returned and traversed here and there, and drew his man inch by inch within the fatal distance.

In the mean time, Sir Thomas Lunsford and George Effingham, exchanging, to use the language of the day, 'a friendly pass or two to fill up the time, were sufficiently engaged with their own struggle to have but little observation to spare for their principals. The knight, however, weakened by his excesses, and of feebler frame than his antagonist, soon found himself a mere child in the hands of so powerful a fighter as the Cavalier captain. Twice he tried the *ruse* he had learned amongst the Puritans, and each time he found himself foiled by the iron arm and wrist opposed to him; twice he was driven from his ground, and only regained it by making in turn a furious attack, which left him each time more faint and breathless than before. Wicked Tom Lunsford thought his hour was come; and so it would have come indeed had Effingham been such another

as himself; but George's heart, though he knew it not, was softened by his last night's company and conversation. Amidst the struggles of conscience had arisen a strange, awful sense of responsibility; and even in the heat and hurry of the assault, something seemed to whisper, 'Shall this man's blood too be on thy head?' So he contented himself with forcing his adversary to a disadvantage, and then rapidly disarming him by sheer superiority of strength.

As Lunsford's sword flew several paces from his hand, a heavy fall and a deep groan withdrew Effingham's attention from his own helpless enemy. Bosville was down at full length upon the wet grass, and Goring was wiping his bloody rapier carefully upon his glove ere he returned it to its sheath.

It was no time for punctilious courtesy. The accursed thrust had done its duty well. Humphrey's face was deadly pale; there were livid circles round his eyes, and the dark blood was welling up from his chest and saturating the white front of his delicate Flanders shirt. George's heart stopped beating as he knelt over his comrade to examine the wound. Even Goring was touched: and the man who had inflicted the injury—the man who but one short minute ago had hate burning in his eye and murder lurking in his heart—would have given his best horse, little as he valued human life, that he had left the deed undone.

'Take care of him, Tom,' said he, wrapping his cloak round him as he prepared to return to Oxford by another route, the only precaution he thought it

necessary to take against discovery, 'and mind, you owe me ten gold pieces fairly won. D— it, I wish I hadn't, too,' he added, as he strode away; 'he was a fine bold lad, and the prettiest horseman I had in my whole division.'

Lunsford and Effingham, now fast friends, lifted poor Humphrey between them, and obtaining assistance at the farmhouse, bore him back with them to Oxford. As they entered the old city, morning service had but just concluded, and the bells were ushering in the day with a holy peaceful chime. And yet what a day's work had these men already finished! what a host of evil passions had they called up only to be allayed with blood! and now the blood was spilt, were the passions raging one whit less fiercely than before? Would not fresh provocation produce fresh crime, and so on *ad infinitum*? Sin seems to be like hunger and thirst, repentance but the lassitude of repletion; anon we hunger and thirst again, and eat and drink our fill once more—only this once more—and then we are sorry for it, and promise faithfully this transgression shall be the last—till the next time—and so *audax omnia perpeti, gens humana ruit*; and knowing this, we, who are never weary of requiring forgiveness, can refuse to forgive each other. Oh, man! man! created but a 'little lower than the angels,' how much higher wouldst thou be than the devils, if left to perish helpless by thyself?

CHAPTER XV.

CROSS-PURPOSES.

SIR GILES ALLONBY, whistling cheerfully as he emerged from his lodgings to commence the military duties of his day, was no less horrified than astonished at the first sight that met his eyes in the street. A limp, helpless body, from which the life seemed to be ebbing rapidly away, covered with a dark cloak, was being borne upon a rude litter, formed hastily of a couple of hurdles and a hedgestake or two, by four stout rustics, whom Sir Thomas Lunsford, with many oaths and entreaties, was adjuring to move as easily as possible to their burthen. Effingham, with a laced handkerchief in his hand, was wiping the froth from the lips of the sufferer, and the countenance of each Cavalier was darkened with an expression of ominous foreboding as to the result. Sir Giles, who expected to encounter nothing more alarming at that early hour than a tumbril of ammunition, a wagon-load of rations, or a drunken trooper deserving of the guard-room returning from his night's debauch, was fairly startled out of his self-command by the ghastly procession. 'Zounds, Tom,' said he, laying his hand upon Lunsford's arm, 'what mischief have you been at already since daybreak? This is some of your accursed tilting-work, I'll be

sworn. Your staccatos and passados, and cursed Italian tricks of fence, that leave a good backswordsmen as helpless as a salmon on a gravel-walk. Who is it now that your quips and your punctilios, and your feints and your ins-and-outs, have placed heels uppermost, when the King sadly lacks soldiers, and every man's life is due to his sovereign? Who is it? Tell me, man, before I turn the guard out, and bring ye all up before the Council, who will take such order with ye that ye shall never so much as handle a riding-wand again!

Lunsford, with all his impudence, was fairly brow-beaten by the old man's vehemence. 'Hold, Sir Giles,' he gasped out, quite humbly. 'The fight was a fair fight, and Captain Bosville brought it on himself. There is life in him still, Sir Giles, and leechcraft may bring him round yet. What, man, 'tis but a hole in his doublet, after all, and the fight was a fair fight, and fought with proper witnesses; ask Captain Effingham if 'twas not.'

'Bosville!' exclaimed old Sir Giles, the tears filling fast in his keen blue eyes, though with the instinctive repugnance of a good heart to a bad one, he turned from Lunsford, and dashed them away with the back of his hand. 'Bosville; the best lad in the whole royal army. The bravest, the kindest, the cheeriest.' Here the old man's voice faltered, and he was forced, as it were, to bully himself into composure again. 'Had it been ranting Will Scarthe, now, or fierce Nick Crispe, or thysel, Tom, who art never out of mischief save when the rest of us are fighting, I had said never a word. But Bosville,' he muttered

under his breath, 'Bosville was worth a thousand of ye all. Within, there!' he cried, raising his voice, and turning back toward his own door. 'Grace! Mary! make ready the tapestry chamber. He lies nowhere but here. Steady there, men: bear him gently up the steps. Do you, sir,' to Effingham, 'run for a surgeon; one practises at yonder shop, where you see the pole. Sound a gallop, sir, and hasten, for your life. My service to you, Sir Thomas Lunsford; if this turns out badly it will be a black day for some of ye when Prince Rupert comes to hear of it, or my name's not Giles Allonby.'

As he spoke, the old Cavalier officer busied himself in removing the cloak from Bosville's helpless form, and assisted in bearing him up the steps, and into his own house, where his servants relieved the rustics from their burthen. Those philosophers having been dismissed with a handsome gratuity, returned to their original obscurity, enlivened as long as the money lasted by a strenuous course of tipping, and many a revised version of the adventure in which they had been engaged; whilst Humphrey, now for the first time exhibiting signs of returning consciousness, was carefully conveyed to the tapestried chamber, and there laid under a magnificent canopy, adorned with ominously funereal feathers, on a huge state bed.

As they bore him upstairs, a pale scared face was seen looking over the banisters, belonging to no less important a person than Faith herself, the conscious cause of all this disturbance and bloodshed. Breathless and trembling, she rushed instinctively to Mary Cave's chamber, to bid her, as the bolder of the two,

break the sad news to Grace Allonby ; but Mary had not returned from her early service about the person of the Queen, to whom she was again attached, and Faith, beside herself with mingled feelings of terror, pity, and remorse, was fain to seek her own pallet, and bury her face in the pillow in a fit of hysterical weeping, affording but little relief to her own agitation, and calculated to lead to no very decided result.

Thus it came to pass that Grace Allonby, leaving her chamber, neat, well dressed, and composed, to commence her daily duties, was met in the passage by three or four servants bearing that which to all appearance was a corpse, and although Sir Giles considerably interposed his tall person between his daughter and the ghastly burden, one glimpse which she caught was sufficient to assure her loving heart that it was Humphrey, and none but he, who lay stretched out there before her eyes.

Had Grace been a heroine of romance, she would have had two courses open to her. She might either have given vent to one piercing shriek, which should have rung in her listener's ears till their dying day, and then, letting all her back hair down at once, have clasped both hands upon her heart, and fallen stone dead in the effort, but always with a tasteful regard to the disposition of her draperies, on the floor ; or, with a lofty disdain for all feeling in such an emergency, but with a stony glare and a white statuelike face, she might have bled him herself on her own responsibility with her own bodkin, and so, seeing he had already bled nearly to the verge of the next world on his own account, have perfected the sacrifice

of the man she loved, and exhibited at the same time her own presence of mind and mistaken notions of the healing art. But Grace Allonby was no heroine, only a loving, timid, trustful young woman, so her knees knocked together, and her lips grew quite white and twitched while she spoke, but she managed to clasp her hands upon Sir Giles's shoulder, and to ask him what she wanted.

'Oh, father, father! he's not quite—' she could not bring herself to say the word—'he's only wounded; only wounded, father!'

And as she could not *ask* if he was dead, so she could not bring herself to *think* him dead. 'Tis always so with the young, with those who have never known sorrow. There is an elasticity about the heart that has never been broken down, which bears up and protests as it were against the possibility of despair. Who knows how often she had brooded over her love, the love she scarcely confessed even to herself in the depths of her virgin heart; how many probabilities she had calculated, and possibilities she had fancied; how many chances had occurred to her that he might not perhaps care for *her*; that he might think her too plain, though her glass gave the lie to that; or too ignorant, or too humble and foolish and girlish for such a Paladin as she imagined him; how he might be separated from her by accident or duty, or her father's command, but by death—no, that had never entered her head; it could not be, she loved him so: it could *not* be. When George Effingham returned with the doctor, and the man of science, after shaking his own head and feeling his patient's

pulse, and probing his wound, and otherwise putting him to no small pain and discomfort, declared that life was still hanging by a thread, a thread, moreover, that only required great care, and his own constant skill, to become once more the silver cord which Goring's rapier had so nearly severed, she felt scarcely grateful enough for the good news, she had been so persuaded of it all along. Die! she never thought he was going to die. He would get well, of course, quite well, and she would nurse him and wait upon him: there could be no harm in that, and it would take a long time to restore him, and when he was *quite* strong again, not before, he might leave them and go back to the army, to be wounded perhaps again. All this was consolatory, no doubt; nevertheless she went to her chamber, and prayed her heart out upon her knees, weeping plentifully, you may be sure, and such prayers never hurt a wounded man yet, to our thinking, nor a strong one either, for the matter of that. Happy he for whom such tears are shed, such orisons offered up.

She soon came back, with a pale steady face and red eyes, to take her place in the sick-chamber, where, according to the custom of the time, she quickly established herself as nurse and watcher, and general directress of the whole establishment. There was less mock-modesty in the days of which we write than in the present; less fancied evil, less of that strange prudish virtue which jumps at once to the most improper conclusions, and which, if there be any truth in the old adage, that 'to the pure all things are pure,' must have some dark mental spots of its

own to justify its suspicions. Though the manners of the Court were sufficiently corrupt, the great bulk of the higher classes were to the full as correct and decorous in their demeanour as those of the present time; while for true purity and kindness of heart, the charity that thinketh no evil, the generosity that forgiveth wrong, who shall say that the keen, high-minded Cavaliers, and their simple straightforward dames, had not the best of it, as compared with the framework of our own cold, conventional, and somewhat cowardly state of society? with whose members the prime moral maxim is founded, not on what you *do*, but what people *say* of you; who wink conveniently enough at the infraction of every commandment in the Decalogue, provided you are scrupulous to keep the eleventh, which they have themselves added to it, and which says, 'thou shalt not be found out!'

George Effingham, returning from the doctor's house, he having accompanied that skilful practitioner home to his surgery, with lint, bandages, divers curiously coloured phials, and other munitions of the pharmacopœia, was somewhat startled to find an exceedingly fair and graceful young lady established in supreme command of the sick-room, and issuing her orders with the tact and decision of one to whom such a situation was neither new nor confusing. Indeed shrewd blows had been going now for some time between the Cavaliers and Roundheads, and Grace had already been often present at the healing of a broken-head, a sabre-cut, or the dangerous orifice of a musket-ball. Therefore George, as we have said,

thrusting his grim face into the half-darkened chamber, started as though at the presence of an angel of light when his eyes encountered those of the young lady, and it was with a degree of bashfulness somewhat foreign to his nature that he assisted his new acquaintance in the disposition of the coverlets and pillows, and other arrangements for the ease of the sufferer, question and reply passing at the same time in subdued whispers, which promoted a far closer acquaintance in a short half-hour than would have sprung up under ordinary circumstances in a month.

Perhaps a woman never appears to such advantage as when tending the sick, moving gently through the room, or bending tenderly over the couch of the sufferer. George followed her about with his eyes, and wondered as he gazed. This was the sort of woman he had never seen before, or if he had, only in the conventional circles of society, never as now in her own home, that home's prime ornament and chiefest blessing. Like many another, he had not arrived at manhood without experiencing certain partialities for those of the other sex,—here dazzled by a sparkling eye, there wooed by a saucy smile; but his experience had hitherto lain amongst women of a far different class and character from Grace Allonby. Phyllis was all he could wish, nay, more boisterous in her glee than accorded with George's melancholy temperament; but Phyllis must first of all have a purse of gold chucked into her lap—after that who so kind as Phyllis? Lalage, again, required constant devotion; but it must be offered at her shrine in public for all the world to see, or it was valueless, and he who

would win her smiles must be content to take them as they came, share and share alike with fifty rivals. So George's higher feelings soon revolted from free, flaunting, flirting Lalage. He had got tired of women's society altogether, had devoted himself ardently to his profession, was plunged heart and soul in the whirlpool of controversy, engaged in a struggle of conscience against habit, prejudice, loyalty, and worldly honour; and now, just at the moment when of all times in his career he had least leisure and least inclination to wear a woman's chain, burst upon him the vision of what had been his ideal all his life—a pure, high-bred, high-minded girl, simple and sincere as the veriest wild flower in the woodland, yet cultivated and refined as the most fashionable lady about the Court. Alas, poor George Effingham! It was in short and broken whispers that he explained to her the origin of the duel which had terminated so seriously. For once George found himself quite eloquent as he defended his friend, and threw all the blame of the affair on the aggressor. 'It was your maid, as I understand, Mistress Grace, who was so shamefully insulted by Goring, and Humphrey could not do otherwise, as a man of honour and a gentleman, than interpose in her behalf. Had it been any other swordsman in the army we should have had the best of it; but I knew from the first that trick in tierce of the General's would be too much for the young one. You see he fainted twice, doubled, disengaged, and then came in under the arm—thus. Pardon me, madam,' said George, interrupting himself as he caught the bewildered expression of his listener's

countenance, and half laughing that his own clumsy enthusiasm should have betrayed him into a disquisition on swordsmanship with a young lady. 'Pardon me, you cannot be interested in such details, but indeed it was no fault of Humphrey's that he was led into this embroilment. He was always a chivalrous lad, and a gallant, and one who would face any odds to defend the weak against the strong.' And then he went on to tell her how the young soldier now stretched out so pale and helpless on that bed, had saved the child in a deadly cross fire at the attack of a small redoubt in Flanders, and had held the back door of the farm-house in Wiltshire so gallantly with his single rapier against half a score of Ireton's pikes; and how he had given quarter to the tall corporal that thrust at him from behind after he had taken him prisoner at Kington; and sundry other anecdotes illustrative of Humphrey's chivalry and Humphrey's tender heart.

Grace listened with clasped hands and streaming eyes. 'I was *sure* it could not be his fault,' she said; and equally *sure* she would have been, doubtless, had all the witnesses sworn and all the juries in England found the reverse. Will any amount of proof destroy a woman's faith in the man she has once taken into her heart? On the contrary, it seems that the worse he behaves, the closer she huddles him up and hides him there, and defies all truth and reason to make her think ill of her nestling. Verily he who has a place in that *sanctum* should strive to bear himself worthily of such unbounded faith and constancy. 'I was *sure* it could not be his fault,' she repeated, and removed the

locks that had fallen across his brow, and propped the cushion under his shoulders with such a tender caressing hand that rough George Effingham turned his head away to hide his emotion; yet there was a strange feeling as of pain creeping about *his* heart too.

So they watched him silently a little longer, and presently he stirred and groaned and moved as if he would fain turn upon his couch, but the bandages prevented him, and the restraint seemed to arouse him, for he opened his eyes languidly, looked around as though in search of some one who was missing, and muttered a few indistinct words, of which his listeners only caught the sounds 'Mary—loyalty—Mary,' and then groaned once more and his eyes closed, and poor Grace, becoming more and more painfully alive to his danger, thought for a moment that he was gone. It was not so, however. A potion had been left by the surgeon to be given the instant the patient should show signs of vitality, and the two strangely assorted nurses administered it to the best of their abilities, and again sat silently down in the darkened chamber to watch his slumbers and await his waking, for on that waking, so said the leech, would hang the issues of life and death. They might not speak now even in whispers, for such a slumber was on no account to be broken. Sir Giles, with a discretion that did him credit, had allowed no rumours of the *rencontre* to get about, dreading the disturbance visitors might occasion at his house. Mary, in fulfilment of her duties about the Queen, was ignorant that the man who had sworn fealty to her only the night before, whose devotion

conjured up the vision of her dear face even on the confines of life and death, was lying within a few hundred paces, helpless, wounded, in the extremity of danger, and worked on in happy unconsciousness at her embroidery, receiving and returning the empty compliments of the flippant courtiers with her usual readiness and composure. Truth to tell, Mary had thought but little about him since the morning. So the house was quiet and the dark sick room silent as the grave, and the two watchers sat busied with their own thoughts. George Effingham, scanning his fair companion with an ever-increasing interest, and she sitting with averted face and drooping head, buried deep in thought or mayhap in prayer. Had she heard those few muttered words? could she interpret their meaning? had they caused that quiet look of suffering which contracted her gentle features? And yet to have had him safe she would have given him up willingly, nay thankfully, and her tears flowed afresh at the thought; so, womanlike, she waited and wept and watched. It was evening ere he woke, the crisis was past, and he was saved. Saved! she could scarcely demonstrate her gratitude sufficiently. With what a pleasant smile she gave George both her pretty hands, and shook his own large ones so kindly and cordially and thankfully. How she played about Sir Giles with childlike glee, and despatched the servants here and there in search of every comfort and luxury that could be wanted during the next month, and tripped up and down stairs in person after everything she had ordered, and finally flung herself into Mary Cave's arms, and burst out weeping yet again, vowing 'she was so

happy—*so* happy! she had never been so happy in her life before.' Deep and anxious thoughts had made their home too in the breast of that composed and dignified lady. From the moment of her return, when she had been informed of Humphrey's danger, she too had watched anxiously for the issues of life and death, had felt more than pity, more than interest, for the gallant warm-hearted youth who had given himself up to her with such devotion and self-abandonment. She had crept to the chamber-door, and listened to the heavy breathing of the sleeper, had trembled from head to foot for the result of his awakening, and when the moment of relief at length arrived, had sent back the tears that longed to burst forth with an effort of which she alone was capable. Stately and unmoved she came to look at him once where he lay: his eye brightened as it met hers, and, weak as he was, he strove to take her hand. He went to sleep again quite quietly after that, happy and peaceful like a child.

George Effingham, going back to his quarters loaded with the thanks and gratitude of the whole household, crossed the street to look up at a certain window, where a dim light seen through the curtain marked where his sick comrade lay, and a figure flitting across it ever and anon showed that the wounded man did not lie there uncared for. George must have been much attached to his brother officer, and much concerned for the care in which he left him, to judge by the deep sigh which he heaved, as after a good five minutes' watching he turned away and strode off to his own lodging.

A good constitution, unimpaired by too much claret, and over which not more than five-and-twenty summers have shed their roses and their thorns, soon recovers even from such an awkward injury as a thrust through the regions about the lungs, and the patient in such cases usually finds his relish and appetite for life enhanced in proportion to the narrow risk he has run of losing it. A fortnight had scarcely elapsed from the period of Humphrey's duel, ere he was out of bed and able to enjoy to the utmost the many comforts and pleasures of convalescence. True, all violent exercise was forbidden for a time, and the sorrel was condemned to remain idle in the stable, whilst military duty of course was for the present not to be thought of; but there are certain circumstances which can make the sofa a very pleasant exchange for the saddle, and that soldier must indeed be devoted to his profession who would not sometimes wish to find his temporary bivouac in a fair lady's withdrawing-room.

A first-floor even in Oxford, with a solemn look-out upon the massive architecture of an old grey college, enlivened ever and anon by a squadron of cavalry marching by, their trumpets sounding, their bridles and stirrup-irons ringing, and their royal pennons flaunting on the breeze, or a party of plumed and brocaded courtiers sweeping haughtily up the street with the same air that became their stately persons and rich dresses so well in their own beloved Mall—an easy couch drawn to the window, and surrounded by all the little comforts that lady nurses alone know how to gather round the invalid—a few late autumnal flowers scattered tastefully about the room,

a low wainscoted apartment, with carved and ornamented panels, elaborate cornices, Venetian mirrors, and strange quaint corners and cupboards, and fantastic ins and outs—two beautiful women pervading the whole, and shedding, as it were, an atmosphere of refined comfort around, the one worshipped and deified as a goddess, the other loving and devoted as a nymph—a tried and well-known comrade continually dropping in with the latest accounts from the army, the freshest news of the Court—and a merry, good-humoured host, never satisfied unless his wounded guest was supplied with the best of everything, and continually devising new indulgences and luxuries on his behalf—all this combined to make Humphrey's convalescence so delightful a process that we are fain to believe the only person who experienced a slight feeling of disappointment when he made his first journey round the room, with the aid of George Effingham's strong arm and a crutch, was the restored sufferer himself, so happy had he been in his illness, so loth was he to become once more independent of the care and kindness to which he had got accustomed.

Sir Giles was frequently absent on his military duties, so the two ladies and the two young Cavalier officers were thrown almost constantly together, for George Effingham esteemed it prudent to keep as quiet as possible after the duel, and Mary Cave easily obtained leave from her good-natured mistress to devote as much time as she pleased to the amusement of the wounded hero. Anything in the shape of sentiment found its way too surely to Henrietta's

heart, and her lively imagination had already constructed a sufficiently interesting love tale out of the materials she was at no loss to gather from her gossiping courtiers. A beautiful woman, a pretty waiting-maid, a duel with Goring, and a handsome young soldier run through the body, constituted a framework on which to elaborate a romance voluminous as the *Grand Cyrus* itself. So the *quartette* sat and amused each other day by day, three of them rapidly and steadily imbibing that delicious poison which, like the fruit gathered from the tree of knowledge, gives the first insight into the inner life, and darkens the outer one for ever afterwards.

Mary alone seemed to boast immunity from the disease. She had had it, she thought, like the measles or the small-pox, and, except in a very modified form, scarce worth apprehension. She was safe from a fresh attack. How it had scarred and altered her is no matter. The visible face was still fresh, and rosy, and radiant, if her heart had grown prematurely old, and hard, and withered; the process of petrification had been painful, no doubt. Experience, however, had not blinded her, and she alone of the four companions saw clearly and judged rightly of what was going on. She said as much one afternoon over her embroidery, as they sat watching the early sunset gilding the opposite wall, plunged in a delicious day-dream, from which, even while she spoke, she felt it was cruelty to wake them. It was the very day on which Bosville had made his first tour round the room, having previously received a ceremonious visit of congratulation from his late antagonist; for Goring, as

soon as he heard the wounded man was out of danger, had thought it, as he said, but common politeness to inquire after him, and had spent half an hour by his couch, during which he had made a thousand professions of regard and friendship, and rendered himself vastly agreeable to the two gentlemen. Of the ladies, Mary despised his character thoroughly, though she admired his talents; and as for Grace, if looks of scorn and hatred could kill, she would have run him through the body as he stood there upon the floor.

‘Tis an idle winter,’ quoth Mary, bending low over her sewing, and turning her head away, for she was not insensible to the pain her words would too surely inflict; ‘and yet, from what Lord Goring tells us, there is still work to be done down in the west. What say you, Captain Effingham, a squadron of Cavaliers with Prince Rupert in Gloucestershire were merrier company than two quiet dames in an Oxford lodging-house?—a good horse and a *demi-pique* saddle a more health-restoring resting-place than yonder easy couch by the window?’ Mary spoke quickly and uneasily, her colour went and came, and she could not forbear glancing towards Humphrey, whose pale cheek crimsoned immediately, and who turned on her a look of pain and reproach that well nigh brought the tears to her eyes. Grace looked scared and confused. *She* did not think her patient was well enough yet for a *demi-pique* saddle. It was anything but an idle winter to *her*. She glanced fondly and gratefully at Effingham, and George felt his great strong heart thrill and bound with pleasure as he replied,

‘We must not move him just yet, Mistress Mary. Such a wound as his might open again, and if it did, all the doctors in Oxford could not save him. When he gets better, he is to have a troop of “The Lambs,”* so Hopton tells me, and then he will probably soon qualify himself for your nursing once more. As for me,’ added Effingham, darkly, ‘I doubt if I shall ever draw sword to the old war-cry again.’

‘You, too, have been idle long enough,’ replied Mary, with a piercing glance, under which George winced and lowered his eyes. ‘The blade will get rusty that rests in the scabbard. There are other wounds to be taken than those dealt by a pair of dark eyes, Captain Effingham, and Oxford is a bad place for you, for more reasons than one. Listen.’ She drew him aside into the window, and whispered so low as not to be overheard, though Humphrey’s eyes wandered uneasily after her motions. ‘You are too good to fight a losing battle all your days. You do not know what it is; better not learn the lesson. Take my advice, strike your tents, sound “boots and saddles!” Go back into active, stirring life, it is your element, and forget the dream you have been dreaming already too long.’

Effingham started, glanced uneasily at Grace, and replied at once,

‘My sword may rust, and welcome, Mistress Mary.’

* So called from their wearing *white* doublets. Sir John Suckling had a troop in them called the ‘coxcomb troop,’ from the splendour of their appointments. Like ‘the Duke’s’ dandies in the Peninsula, these coxcombs were not found to be the *last* in the fray.

It has been drawn too often already in a bad cause. Must we all think there is no duty to fulfil in life but to tilt at each other's throats? Must we all be as hot-headed, and foolhardy, and inconsiderate as that romantic boy on the sofa yonder?'

'It is a pity you are not,' she replied quickly, with a glance of admiration, almost tenderness, at the wounded youth. 'Poor boy, he is one in a million! but it is of you, Captain Effingham, that I wish to speak. You are watched here in Oxford; your opinions are known. It was but last evening they talked of you in the Queen's apartments. They turned it all to jest, of course, as they do everything; but such jests are pointed and dangerous; it is better not to be the subject of them. Take my advice, leave Oxford, keep your heart unscathed and your head upon your shoulders; another day or two and it may be too late!'

Effingham bowed and sat down again. He seemed to be revolving her counsel thoughtfully in his mind: but he gazed at Grace the while, and Grace looked anxiously at Humphrey, whose eyes wandered after Mary as she moved about the room; and so the four played on their game at cross-purposes, and derived, doubtless, some incomprehensible satisfaction from the pastime. At length the fair disturber of their peace approached the sofa once more.

'I am going into waiting to-night,' she said to Bosville, with one of her sunny, winning looks. 'The Queen will ask me how you are; when shall I say you will be ready for your command?'

His eye sparkled: he seemed a new man.

‘In a week at farthest,’ said he boldly. ‘The day after I can get into the saddle I will be with them. Thank you for the interest you take in me—thank you for all your kindness.’ He seized her hand, and Grace walked away to arrange the flowers at the other end of the room. ‘I *will* be worthy,’ he whispered, the tears starting to his eyes, for he was still weak from loss of blood. ‘“Loyalty before all!”’

‘“Loyalty before all!”’ she repeated in her sweet, low voice, returning the pressure of his thin, wasted fingers; and from that moment the patient was a convalescent, and on the road to a rapid recovery.

So Mary went off to dress for her courtly duties, and Ellingham, with a heavy heart, took leave of his kind friends, and left the well-known room, with its many attractions, for his lonely lodging—how dreary by the contrast! and Grace, who could not bear to-night of all nights to be left alone with the patient, betook herself to her chamber, whither, as we dislike to see young ladies in tears, we will not follow her; and Humphrey, left alone in the darkening twilight, sank into a refreshing sleep, gilded with dreams of a pair of loving eyes, and a fair fond face, and a soft voice that whispered ever, ‘Loyalty before all!’

‘I’m sure I don’t know what’s come to my young lady,’ observed Faith to a staid and sober personage, who now seldom left her side. ‘She’s been and locked herself into her room again, and when I knock at the door, it’s “Presently, Faith, presently,” and I can’t see through the keyhole, for she’s gone and left the key in it, but by the sound of her voice I’ll be sworn—that is,’ amended the pretty Puritan, catch-

ing herself up—‘I would venture to affirm, she’s been crying; and what that’s for, with all she can want in the house, and the Captain out of danger—bless his handsome face and bold spirit (though sinful)—is clean past me!’

‘Women is mostly unaccountable,’ replied the individual addressed, writhing his grim features into the semblance of a smile. ‘Young ones’ specially, though I’m not sure that the middle-aged isn’t the most tricksome. Perhaps they live and learn; live and learn, Mistress Faith, like their betters, but they can’t be expected to be reasonable like and understanding for all that, poor things; it’s a lower creation, there’s no doubt it’s a lower creation, and unaccountable accordingly.’

It may be remarked that our friend Dymocke’s philosophy, for Dymocke, we need hardly inform the reader, it was who spoke, was of a somewhat vague and misty nature, inconsequent in its arguments and inconclusive in its results, and as such he doubtless considered it adapted for the softer sex, for Dymocke, though professing, and indeed demonstrating, a great regard and affection for that division of the species, still invariably assumed the attitude of superiority which he deemed becoming the dignity of the nobler variety, and was looked up to and revered by the women accordingly. He and Faith, since the midnight rencontre, and subsequent removal of Humphrey to Sir Giles Allonby’s lodgings, had become inseparable, a sense of favour and protection on the one hand, accompanied by a strong partiality for a young and pretty face, and a consciousness of gratitude and

inferiority, with a charitable desire for the conversion of a sinner on the other, cementing their friendship into an intimacy that every day assumed a more tender character. There is nothing makes a woman so keen as the chance of a proselyte. It stirs up in her the chief characteristics of her organization—her natural benevolence, her religious zeal, her unaccountable delight in upsetting all pre-existing arrangements, her little spice of contradiction, and her innate love of change. It is such a pleasing excitement, and she persuades herself she is doing so much good all the time, so she *converts* him, or *perverts* him, no matter which, and when she has turned him completely round to her own way of thinking, finds herself, after all, somewhat dissatisfied with the result.

Many an argument did Faith hold with her admirer upon all the vexed questions of the day, standing, as she did now, with her mistress's garments thrown over her arm, and a lighted candle in her hand, wherewith she illumined passages, staircases, entrance halls, and such out-of-the-way places as she selected for the theatre of her discourse. Faith's strongest point had hitherto been the unlawfulness of using weapons of fleshly warfare, even in self-defence, but she had been beaten somewhat from this by the events of the last fortnight, and the gallant stand made by her protector with his oaken eudgel in her defence. Now, however, this attack of her admirer on the sex roused her to make use of her old argument, and she replied with considerable volubility and a heightened colour, 'Lower

creature or not, Master Hugh, and unaccountable, if *you* please, leastways we use the weapons of sense and reason in *our* behalf, not ranting like you men, with your weapons out at every wry word, and a stout cudgel ready to enforce your arguments, as you eall them: pretty arguments, forsooth! And call yourselves reasoning creatures; get along with you, do!

‘An oak cudgel was the best argument t’other night, Mistress Faith,’ replied Dymocke; ‘d’ye think wild Goring and his troop of roaring fly-by-nights would have listened to any other? What would you have had me do less when he lifted thy veil, the villain, and I tripped him up and laid him on his back on the pavement ere he could cry “hold?” What wouldst thou have done thyself, lass, answer me that, if I hadn’t been too quick for him, general of horse though he be?’

‘I should not have offered him the other cheek, for sure,’ replied Faith, demurely; and Dymocke, taking the hint, put a period to the conversation by another of those practical rejoinders which the proverb informs us are only appropriate when the ‘gorse is in bloom.’

CHAPTER XVI.

THE QUEEN'S APARTMENTS.

IN three days Humphrey was sufficiently recovered to go abroad and taste the fresh air out of doors, a cordial best appreciated by the sufferer who has been long confined to a sick room. In three more he was sent for by the Queen, whose curiosity had been much roused by the history of the quarrel and the duel, whose interest, moreover, had been excited by Mary's account of the wounded man's chivalrous and romantic character, and who had seen with her own eyes that he was well-favoured, which with Henrietta added considerably to the chances of a courtier's advancement.

‘You must bring your young *chevalier* to my private receptions, Marie,’ said the goodnatured Queen, with her arch smile. ‘Not on the great nights when his Majesty comes, and we are all as grave as councillors, and retire when the clock strikes ten, but to one of my own quiet evenings, when we will sup in the Round Room, and Lady Carlisle shall sing us a new “*roman*,” and Kirke tell us her wickeded stories, and we will console the poor youth that he has got well so soon, and lost the pleasure of being nursed by pretty Marie. Are you very fond of him, *Mignonne*?’

'I have never said so, Madame,' answered Mary with quiet composure, but with a slight elevation of the head and neck that made her look far more like a queen than the thoughtless little lady who questioned her. 'It is not my custom to make confessions, and if it were, I have here nothing to confess.'

'But there is another,' interposed Henrietta, eagerly. 'Ah, now I see it all; Grace, that is her name. I know her, I have seen her; dark-haired and *gracieuse*, with a *petite mine*. You are jealous, Marie; jealous, and with good reason, the *gracieuse* is a dangerous rival, the wounded man cannot run away from her charms. She is always in the house, and my poor Marie has been obliged to be about *our* person here. She has lost him to the *gracieuse*, and she is jealous. My proud Marie jealous like any other woman, after all; it is too good a joke!' And Henrietta, who was not particular *why* she laughed, so long as she *did* laugh, broke out into a peal of hilarity, and clapped her hands like a merry, mischievous, light-hearted child.

Mary laughed too, a low, silvery, pleasant laugh. Had her mistress been a better judge of human nature she would have detected in that laugh no wounded feelings, no jealous apprehensions, nothing but a proud consciousness of power, an unshaken security in her own dominion, perhaps a touch of pity, perhaps a shadow of regret that she was not more engrossed with her conquest. Yet she had never liked Bosville so well as at that moment.

They were pleasant little meetings, those private receptions of the Queen at Merton College. That

they conduced in any degree to the stability of the royal party few will be found to assert, but none can deny that they furthered to a considerable extent the consumption of well-cooked dishes and sparkling wines, the expenditure of much compliment and small-talk, not to mention a large amount of flirtation and intrigue, political as well as private, and the occasional exchange of vows not sanctioned by the Church. The Puritans held these meetings in especial reprobation, and from Jezebel downwards, esteemed no reproachful name too abusive with which to vilify the royal lady who presided over them; whilst many a wise head amongst the old Cavalier party, and the more experienced advisers of the King, opined that neither Ireton's pikes nor Cromwell's Ironsides had inflicted half such deadly wounds on their Sovereign's cause as the empty, scheming, underhand circle of selfish gallants and flaunting dames that surrounded his misguided wife. Yet Charles could never be brought to believe it. With the touching obstinacy of a weak, yet conscientious and enthusiastic nature, he lavished on Henrietta a blind adoration that she seems thoroughly to have despised. He confided to her all his most secret schemes, even to the meditated treacheries that he seems to have persuaded himself were not only venial but meritorious; he laid bare for her his whole heart, with all its shortcomings and all its weaknesses; he reversed the order of the sexes in looking up to her for advice and assistance, and she despised him accordingly. It is a fatal mistake. Fond as women are of power, gladly as they see the man they love at

their feet, thrilling as is the delicious consciousness that their lightest word can tame and turn the rougher nature to their will, yet, when the moment of danger and difficulty *really* comes, if he cannot act for himself, and for her too; if he cannot stand up and take the brunt of all, and shield her, so to speak, with his body; if he quails beneath the storm and leans upon her, the weaker reed, for support, he is never a *man* to her again.

Charles, in his council or his closet, writing in cipher to his generals, or armed in mail and plate at the head of his army, was never apart from his Queen in spirit. Every action of his life, every one of his letters, every turn he made out of the judicious path, proves beyond a doubt the romantic affection he cherished for that empty flirting little Frenchwoman. She was never out of his thoughts. Let us see how she returned the love of the ill-fated king.

Sitting on a low ottoman, sparkling with diamonds, a huge feathered fan in one hand, and setting down with the other an empty coffee-cup on a richly chased salver held by a black page-boy, Henrietta looked more brilliant than usual as she carried on a lively conversation with a plain, sallow gentleman, who appeared to occupy a high place in her Majesty's favour. Lord Jermyn knew his power well, and made unsparing use of it. With no very pleasing exterior, none of the physical advantages which are generally supposed to make such way in a lady's good graces, and to which she was quite as fully alive as the rest of her sex, he had obtained an ascendancy over the Queen which can only be accounted for by

his extraordinary knowledge of character, his facility for adapting himself to the tastes and adopting the opinions of those whose favour he thought it worth his while to cultivate, and above all, his pre-eminent talent for, and unconquerable love of, that complicated system of intrigue which ruled the whole Court, and originating in the Queen's own private apartments, spread its meshes over the length and breadth of England, nullifying the deliberations of the wise, and paralysing the blows of the strong.

She was conversing with him in a low voice, mingling the most important political topics, the secret counsels of her husband, and the private intelligence from his generals, with the extravagant language of gallantry then in vogue, with the lightest jests, the silliest gossip, and the emptiest laughter that ever floated through a drawing-room. His manner was that of respectful admiration while he listened, yet there was at times an expression of authority in his eye, and tone of sarcasm in his voice, that argued his consciousness of his own power, and the value in which he was held by the voluble Queen. As he leaned over her reclining figure, and replied in corresponding tones to her whispered confidences, the pair had far more the appearance of a lover and his mistress than a subject and a sovereign.

Partly concealed by an old Japanese screen of grotesque carving and quaint ornament, but with ringing laugh and lively sally, declaring plainly their whereabouts, Lord Bernard Stuart and Mrs. Kirke carried on an amicable warfare, according to their wont, half jest half earnest, sparkling with quips and

innuendos and playful satire, and many a phrase implying far more than met the ear, with as much freedom from restraint as though they had been a hundred leagues from the presence of royalty. The young nobleman was attending on her Majesty in the execution of his duty; and a very pleasant duty it seemed to be, judging by the expression of his handsome countenance, enhanced by the uniform of the Life Guards, which he commanded. A breast-plate, back-piece, and cuisses of steel, set off his fine figure and chivalrous features to the best advantage, whilst the rich lace on his buff surcoat, the delicate embroidery of his collar, and gaudy folds of his crimson silk scarf, tempered with an air of courtly splendour these warlike accessories of costume. Long fair curls, soft and perfumed like a woman's, floated over his shoulders; as Mrs. Kirke looked up in his face from the low couch on which she had placed herself, she could not withhold from that handsome smiling countenance a part of the admiration which she believed in her heart to be alone due to a certain pair of arch blue eyes and a certain mischievous dimpled smile that met her in the glass every day. Like many another carpet knight, Lord Bernard was no contemptible adversary to encounter when blows were falling thick and fast on a stricken field. On more than one occasion he had petitioned in his own name, and that of the brother coxcombs whom he commanded, for leave to abandon their peculiar duty of guarding the King's person, and to charge in the van with Prince Rupert and his desperadoes. The stanch stern Ironsides, the grim Presbyterian

pikemen, found these curled Malignants very fiends in fighting; and though they compared them energetically to Absalom and other good-looking reprobates, and cursed them with fervent piety, yet did they go down before them like barley in harvest-time notwithstanding.

Now, however, Lord Bernard was on guard, and his own sense of responsibility not permitting him to retire to rest, whilst the Queen's partiality for handsome faces afforded him a certain welcome in her private apartments, he was combining duty with pleasure by flirting furiously with Mrs. Kirke—a lady for whom he openly avowed an ardent attachment, which she as openly returned, and which was not likely to do either of them the slightest harm.

Some men might have been in danger, too, for the Syren was a fearfully well-favoured Syren, and sat upon her rock in the most bewitching of attitudes, and sang her seducing song in the most enchanting of tones. Besides she had spent her whole life in the luring of mariners; had stranded them by scores on different shoals and quicksands; had frightened them and teased them, and ducked them and drowned them, and never wet her own feet, so she boasted, in the process.

If Lord Bernard had only admired blue eyes and golden locks, and smiles and dimples, and white skins and dazzling teeth, he had been in danger too; but the Life-Guardsman's heart was of capacious proportions—constructed, so to speak, in compartments, of which he could empty a drawer at any time to make room for fresher contents; or if need were,

shut it up and desist from using it altogether. So the pair were but fencing with buttons on their foils, after all.

Their engagement was at its height: she was shaking her curls like a shower of gold all over her saucy face and white shapely neck and shoulders; he was picking up the fan she had purposely dropped, and pressing it enthusiastically to his lips, when the Queen called him suddenly to her side; and Lord Bernard, at once changing his manner for one of the most reserved and stately decorum, returned the fan with a profound bow, and stalked across the room to wait her Majesty's command with another solemn and reverential obeisance.

She was determined to punish Jermyn for something he had said; womanlike, she had no difficulty in finding an opportunity. Handsome Lord Bernard had been always rather a favourite, so she beckoned him across to her, and the Life-Guardsman obeyed accordingly.

'Lady Carlisle tells me you have a vacancy in the troop, my lord?' she said, pushing away the little black boy to make room for the young nobleman—an action not lost upon Jermyn, and the observation of which did not improve the expression of his sallow face; 'if so, I have already disposed of it.'

'If your Majesty condescends to review us again, we shall have nothing but vacancies left,' was the reply; 'we cannot sustain the bright glances of yourself and your ladies: they pierce our breast-plates, and wither us up like roses in the noon-day sun. With regard to a vacancy, there was none in

the force when I inspected it this evening at curfew. Lady Carlisle, however, was later than usual in the presence—she may have made one since then.’

Lord Bernard was a courtier, but he was a commanding officer as well, and the instincts of the latter will always predominate over every other consideration. He did not approve of this interference with his prerogative, and he did not care if the Queen and Lady Carlisle both knew it.

Henrietta laughed. ‘What say you, Lucy?’ she called out to her favourite, who was working quietly with Mary Cave at the far end of the room, ‘have you been tampering with Lord Bernard’s command since nightfall? If not, we want a vacancy, and you have our commands to go and kill us a Life-Guardsman before supper time.’

Lady Carlisle looked up with her calm innocent smile.

‘Shall I begin with Lord Bernard himself, Madame?’ she asked; ‘he seems half dead already; unless you, Mrs. Kirke, will finish what you have nearly accomplished so well.’

Mrs. Kirke did not like Lady Carlisle; she was no match for her, and she knew it; the peeress, in addition to an immovable countenance, possessing the immense advantage of hesitating at *nothing*. But she never refused an appeal to arms even when sure of being worsted, so she laughed merrily and answered—

‘I only kill *my foes*, and that when I am angry. Now, Lord Bernard and I have hardly quarrelled once the whole night. I am not like Lady Carlisle: my ship is but a poor little privateer, with letters of

marque against the enemy—not a pirate, that destroys both sides alike, and knows no distinction when she has hoisted the black flag!

‘You are quite right not to sail under false colours,’ answered Lady Carlisle, with such a clear, guileless look full into Mrs. Kirke’s *rouge*—which indeed was put on a little too thick, and somewhat nearer the cheekbones than Nature plants her own roses—that the discomfited little woman was fain to hide her face behind her fan, and retire into one of her explosions of laughter to cover her confusion. The Queen, however, was amused and delighted at this little passage of arms, and reverted to the subject.

‘Our proud *Marie*,’ she observed, ‘has a *protégé* that we should wish to have about our person. He is young, gallant, and good-looking,’ with a glance at Jermyn, who either winced or pretended to do so—‘*Marie* and I would like him to be near us. What say you, my dear, shall I make Lord Bernard appoint him to the Life-Guards? One word from either of us, and it is done!’

‘Your Majesty is most kind,’ answered Mary, ‘but I entreat you do nothing of the sort. He is pledged already to another service. His honour demands that he should be in the field the instant he is well. He wishes to leave for the West immediately. Your Majesty cannot confer on him a greater kindness than by bidding him depart.’

Mary spoke eagerly, though she retained her self-command. ‘Never’ (she thought in her own heart), ‘never shall he become selfish and intriguing, even if he be a courtier, like all of these.’ Alas! she would

fain have made him a second Falkland; and if she had succeeded what would it have profited? Was he not far too good for her even now?

The Queen laughed at her determination, and rallied her according to her wont. 'You dare not trust him with Lucy and Mrs. Kirke,' she exclaimed; 'you want to detach him from the *gracieuse*. You are jealous, *Marie*, jealous!—and that is the best fun of all. Hush! here he comes.'

A stately yeoman here attended Bosville into the anteroom, through which he was conducted by a decorous gentleman usher in black, armed with a white wand, as far as the door of the presence chamber, where he was handed over to the care of Lord Jermyn, who in right of his office led him up to the Queen herself. Henrietta looked graciously upon the young soldier, and gave him her hand to kiss.

The ladies about a Court are no exception to the general rule of their sex. They prize a novelty as much as do the cherriest-cheeked maidens that take butter to the fair. When the novelty, too, is handsome, graceful, richly dressed, and imbued with a certain air of becoming softness and languor which recent illness leaves upon the young, they are apt to give vent to their curiosity and interest with an ardour that borders upon admiration. This, by the way, is another quality which renders woman-worship so satisfactory and profitable a service.

Mrs. Kirke's fan was down in an instant. 'Who is he?' she whispered to Lord Bernard, who was again by her side; 'very handsome for a brown man, (Lord Bernard was fair and fresh-coloured); 'but what

makes him so pale? and why does he move as if he had stays on? Bandaged, is he, and nearly killed by Goring? How wicked of Goring!—who is charming, too. By the way, why is he not here to-night?' So Mrs. Kirke ran on, keeping her admirer by her side to answer her questions, and ogling the new arrival the while with all the artillery of her mischief-loving eyes.

Lady Carlisle, too, in her quiet modest way—that soft, gentle demeanour, that she flattered herself no mortal man could resist, that left all her noisy, laughing, chattering rivals miles and miles behind—vouchsafed to bestow no small share of attention upon Humphrey Bosville. He was the lion of the evening, and provoked his share of observation accordingly. It so happened that the duel took place at a period when the Court was unusually devoid of incident, and this in times when every week brought news of a battle fought or a town lost or won. Such a state of stagnation as three days without an event of some sort was unbearable; and Bosville's *rencontre* with Goring at so dead a time was a perfect windfall to the weary gossiping courtiers. Even the Queen vouchsafed to inquire particularly after his wounds: and when supper was announced, and the little party adjourned to discuss that merry meal in the Round Room, her Majesty condescended to pour him out a glass of Hippocras with her own white hand, and desired him to quaff it, with a complimentary jeer at his blanched cheeks that brought the colour back to his face.

He sat between Lady Carlisle and Mary Cave.

With the former he bore his share bravely enough in that fictitious species of dialogue which then as now constituted the language of fashionable life, but which was essentially distasteful to the romantic temperament of the simple soldier. To the latter he scarcely spoke three words, but his voice was quite altered; and Lady Carlisle, an experienced practitioner, found him out immediately.

Therefore she could not of course let him alone. Too confident in her own charms, and too essentially heartless to be *jealous* of any woman on earth, she was yet *rapacious* of admiration. If nineteen men out of a score were paying her their homage, she could not rest till she had brought the twentieth also to her feet. Humphrey was young, graceful, and good-looking; but had he been old, misshapen, and ugly, he possessed an infallible charm in Lady Carlisle's eyes—he was evidently the property of another, and must be trespassed on accordingly.

She had been too often at the game not to know exactly how to lay her snares. She waited till the Queen had done with him, and Mrs. Kirke had laughed him out of countenance, and then turned to him with her soft voice and her deep eyes and talked to him of flowers and music, and such topics as she thought most congenial to his temperament, sighing gently between whiles, as giving him to understand that she too was out of her element in that gay circle, and that he was the only man capable of understanding her, if he would but give himself the trouble to try.

Had Bosville been ten years older, he would at

once have flung himself into the spirit of the contest. He would have known that with a disposition like that of Mary Cave, to awaken her jealousy was the nearest road to her heart—that blind submission would never conquer the proud spirit which bends alone to a prouder than itself.

But he was too loyal, too true-hearted to enter into such calculations. There was but one woman in the world for him ; so he was stanch to his faith, here in a Queen's drawing-room as he would have been in his lonely bivouac under the winter sky, or down amongst the horses' feet in a charge, with the life-blood ebbing fast, and everything but his great unconquerable love passing dreamily away. It was his nature to be tyrannized over, as it is the nature of many of the bravest, and gentlest, and noblest of God's creatures. The highest couraged horse winces the most readily from the spurs. Do not drive them in too pitilessly, lest you rouse him once too often. He may fail at last, and fall with you some day to rise no more.

The Queen clapped her hands as the repast concluded, and the black page handed round the grace-cup of spiced wine in a huge antique goblet.

'One of your sweetest songs, Lucy,' said her Majesty to Lady Carlisle, 'and then a fair good night to all.'

As she spoke she signed to the little page to bring a guitar which rested in a corner for the Syren, and withdrawing somewhat apart with Mary Cave, lent a listening ear to the conversation of that lady, who by her animated gestures and eager face appeared to

engross her mistress's attention with some subject of more than common importance.

'The Queen hates music,' said Lady Carlisle, bending languidly over the guitar, and looking softly into Bosville's eyes; 'but I will sing to *you*. What do you like? something about love and war, I am sure. Will you promise to observe the moral if I take the trouble to sing you the song?'

Humphrey answered not much to the purpose. His eyes and thoughts were at the other end of the room, and he had not yet acquired the knack, so useful at Court, of attending to two people at once.

Lady Carlisle swept her hand across the strings; the gesture became her admirably, and with many a covert glance of sly allusion, sang in a low, sweet voice the not inappropriate ballad of

THE PROUD LADYE.

' 'Tis a cheerless morn for a gallant to swim,
 And the moat shines cold and clear;
 Sir knight! I was never yet baulked of my whim,
 And I long for the lilies that float on the brim:
 Go bring me those blossoms here!
 Then I offered them low on my bended knee;
 'They are faded and wet,' said the proud Ladye.

A jay screamed out from the topmost pine
 That waved by the castle wall,
 And she vowed if I loved her I'd never decline
 To harry his nest for this mistress of mine,
 Though I broke my own neck in the fall.
 So I brought her the eggs, and she flouted me;
 'You would climb too high,' quoth the proud Ladye.

The lists were dressed, and the lances in rest,
And our knightly band arrayed,
'Twas stout Sir Hubert who bore him the best,
With a Queen's white glove carried high on his crest,
Till I shore it away with my blade.
But I reeled as I laid it before her.—' See !
It is soiled with your blood,' said the proud Ladye.

' You have sweet red lips and an ivory brow,
But your heart is as hard as a stone ;
Though I loved you so long and so dearly, now
I have broken my fetters, and cancelled my vow,—
You may sigh at your lattice alone.
There are women as fair, who are kinder to me ;
Go look for another, my proud Ladye !'

Her tears fell fast—she began to rue
When she counted the cost of her pride ;
Till she played, and lost it, she never knew
The worth of a heart both kindly and true,
And she beckoned me back to her side ;
While softly she whispered, ' I love but thee !
So I won her at last, my proud Ladye.

She fixed her eyes on Bosville as she concluded ; but his whole attention was taken up by Mary, who, from the corner in which she was established with the Queen, had been looking at him with more than usual observation—he even flattered himself more than usual interest. As Henrietta rose to retire, and distributed a general bow amongst her courtiers in token of dismissal, Mary crossed the room to where he stood, and taking him by the hand, spoke to him in a low agitated voice that thrilled every nerve in his body, weakened as he was by illness, and excited by the scene, the music, the Royal circle, and above all, the presence of her he loved.

‘The Queen has promised me your majority,’ she said, and her voice trembled a little; ‘but you must join the army immediately. Perhaps we may not meet again, even to say, “Farewell!” We shall often think of you. Good-bye, Captain Bosville’—she hesitated, as though about to say something more, but only repeated, ‘Good-bye,’ and vanished after the Queen and her retreating ladies.

So this was all! The guerdon of how many thoughts, how much devotion, how deep a tenderness! He was giving gold for silver, he felt it now. Well, he did not grudge it; but he declined Lord Bernard’s invitation to drink spiced canary with him in the guard-room, and returned to his own quarters at Sir Giles Allonby’s with a slow step and a saddened mien. Was he thinking of his choice—his peerless, proud Ladye? Come what might he would never change it now.

CHAPTER XVII.

'THE PROSELYTE.'

THERE are martyrs in every faith, ascetics of every denomination. 'Tis not by the sincerity of its worshippers that we must argue the infallibility of any creed. The macerated monk, flagellating his bleeding person in his cell, is not more in earnest than the Indian faqueer, erect under a burning sun, his arm stretched out motionless, till the flesh withers from the bone, his hand clenched till the nails grow through the palm. The howling Dervish bids his Moslem monastery echo to his cries at intervals as regular as matins, and complines, and vespers, and all the periods of melodious worship enjoined by the Catholic Church. The bonze of Tartary, the priest of Brahma, meditate for weeks on the Ineffable; whilst the disciple of Juggernaut immolates himself unhesitatingly beneath the wheels of his monstrous idol. Even our own true Faith is not without its fanatics. The tortures of the Inquisition, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the fires of Smithfield, were strange sacrifices with which to glorify the religion of Love. Laud presiding over the Council and signing the inhuman decree by which the culprit was sentenced to lose his ears, doubtless believed he was serving the cause of truth and morality, as fervently

as did Leighton himself when he published that abusive pamphlet against the Queen which drew down upon him the hideous vengeance of the Star Chamber. His sentence, in addition to mutilation, had been imprisonment for life; but a large sum of money furnished in high quarters had bought his escape from his gaolers, and he was even now in Oxford, under the feigned name of Simeon—by which we must in future call him—snatching proselytes out of the lion's mouth; or as he himself termed it, 'labouring in the vineyard through the burden and heat of the day.'

He had promised to meet Effingham again when last they parted at the door of the conventicle, and he had not forgotten his promise. Night after night had he visited the Cavalier officer at his quarters, argued with him, prayed with him, implored him, till, notwithstanding all his previous associations—notwithstanding the first real ardent passion he had ever cherished in his life—Effingham gave way, yielding to his new friend's persuasions and his own convictions; and resolving to become not almost but altogether an adherent of the Puritan party, and a supporter of those zealots who had determined to go the farthest and fastest to the destruction of all government that was not based upon their own wild notions of a direct Theocracy.

Truly, it needed a strong hand and a cool head to rule these stormy elements; to reconcile the conflicting ideas of the speculative, the selfish, and the sincere; to guide the turbulent enthusiast and urge the wavering time-servers, and thus to rear at last a goodly edifice out of such various and chaotic mate-

rials; but when the time comes it is generally found that the Man is also ready, and the Man was even now drilling his Ironsides at Gloucester whose destiny it was to ride rough-shod to power on the blind faith of those who deemed him as fanatical and short-sighted as themselves.

Gaunt and thin, his fine frame square and angular from deficiency of covering, his features sharpened, and his dark eyes shining out more fiercely than usual from under their projecting brows, George Effingham sat alone in his dreary, comfortless room, wrapped in profound meditation, musing darkly on his recent doubts, his present resolution, and the sacrifice he had determined to make of those hopes which were to him as the very light of his eyes—the very breath of his nostrils.

Conflicting passions, the struggles of conscience, the 'worm that dieth not' gnawing at his heart, had wrought upon him in a few weeks the work of years. He looked a middle-aged man already, as the light from the lamp above his head brought out his sunken features in high relief, and deepened the lines upon his forehead and about his mouth. His beard too was flecked with here and there a silvery streak; his dress was careless and disordered; his whole bearing dejected, weary, and worn. With compressed lip and dilated nostril, as of one who suffers inwardly, but is too proud to yield, though none be there to witness, he seemed to watch and wait, though the clenched hand and the foot beating at regular intervals against the floor, denoted that his vigil was one of impatience and anxiety almost too irritating to be borne.

At length a step was heard upon the stairs, and with a deep sigh of relief, Effingham opened the door and admitted his new friend Simeon, armed, as usual, to the teeth, and bearing on his countenance its wonted expression of fervent zeal and rapt enthusiasm.

‘At last,’ said George, as his guest seated himself, and disposed his arms in the most convenient position to be snatched up at a moment’s notice; ‘at last! I have wearied for you as the sick man wearies for the visit of the Lecch; I have expected you since twilight. It is done!—my brother, it is done at last. What it has cost me, neither you nor any other man can imagine. But it is done. I am a disgraced and branded man, and “the place that hath known me shall know me no more.”’

Simeon took him affectionately by the hand. ‘No cross, no crown, my brother!’ he replied. ‘Would you buy the incalculable treasure with that which costs you nothing? See! I have been in the hospitals, and beheld the wounded, maimed and writhing upon their stretchers. I have seen the strong man’s limb shattered by gun-shot, and the surgeon’s knife, merciful in that it spared not, lop off the agonized member, and save the patient from destruction. What though he shiver and faint when the operation is completed? He is a living man instead of a senseless corpse; so is it with the moral gangrene. If thou wouldst preserve thy soul, cut it out. Are we not told that it is better to sacrifice an eye or a limb than to risk the destruction of soul and body? and shall we grudge to offer up the dearest treasures of our

lives, the pride that was as the breath of our nostrils, the earthly honour that was as our daily bread: nay, the fonder, softer feelings that had become as the very life-blood of our hearts, when they are required of us by Him who gives and who takes away? The gift we lay upon the altar, can it cost too much? Suffer, brother—so shalt thou qualify for happiness. Weep and gnash with thy teeth *here* rather than hereafter!

It was a high stern doctrine, and as such qualified to make a due impression on the nature to which it was addressed. Effingham reared his head proudly, and the resolute lip compressed itself tighter than before as he detailed to his friend the doings of that day—doings which even now to his soldier nature could not but seem pregnant with physical degradation.

'I took my commission back to Colepepper,' said he, 'and the old general laughed in my face. I have seen him laugh so, Simeon, when your musqueteers were making a target of his body. He accepted it, however, and then he spoke such words—such bitter words! He dared not have used them to Captain Effingham of his own brigade. General or no general, I had paraded him at point of fox, with a yard and a half of green turf between us; and to give him his due, I think he would fain have provoked me to it even to-day. But I suppose every loyal Cavalier has a right to insult me now!'

He spoke in bitter scorn, scarcely in accordance with the character he was fain to profess.

'But you will meet him yet again in the field,'

urged the warlike religionist; 'you will meet him where you can draw the sword with a good conscience, and strike fair downright blows for the cause of Israel. You will meet him again, though he be hemmed in by his Amalekites; and I, Simeon the persecuted, say unto you, "Smite and spare not!"'

Apparently somewhat comforted by this reflection, Effingham, who had been indignantly pacing the narrow room, sat down again, and proceeded with his narrative.

'When I left him I passed through the guard-room, and I thought the very troopers—my own troopers, some of them fellows that I have seen ere now flinch from following where I led—looked askance at me, as though I was traitor and coward both. Coward!—psha! the dogs know better than that. But I bore it and passed on. Nay, the very citizens in the street—the knaves that have never handled weapon in their lives weightier than an ell-wand or a yard of satin velvet, seemed to take the wall of the disgraced officer, to shoulder the renegade Cavalier into the kennel—and I kept my riding-rod quiet in my hand and passed on. Then I met Sir Giles Allonby—good old Sir Giles, *her* father, Simeon—and he stopped and asked me if it was true? He spoke so kindly, so sorrowfully. "I grieve for it, lad!" said he, and he meant what he said, I know; "I grieve for it, as if I had lost my falcon Diamond or the best horse in my stable. Zounds, man! art not ashamed? Some would be angry with thee, and roundly too, but I grieve for it, lad—by St. George, I do! We all liked thee so well—Grace and Mary,

and all—and now we shall see thee no more. Fare thee well, lad ; I would give thee my blessing, were't not clean against my conscience. Fare thee well !” And now I shall see them no more. Simeon !’ (and he seized his friend’s arm fiercely as he looked him in the face) ‘if my sacrifice be not accepted it had been better for me that I had never been born !’

The enthusiast led him to the window, and pointed out into the cold clear night, brilliant with a million stars. ‘Shall He who hath the treasures of the universe in the hollow of his hand not reward thee ? oh, man of little faith ! Thou hast put thy hand to the plough, see that thou look not back. To-morrow we will shake the dust of Oxford from off our feet, and journey hence, even as Lot journeyed into the desert from the accursed city of the plain !’

With these words, Simeon shook the proselyte warmly by the hand, and taking up his arms, departed stealthily as he had come. Fanatic as he was, Leighton had been in earnest all his life. He had never flinched yet from that narrow and rugged path which he considered it his duty to follow, and his nerve was as unshaken, his confidence in the protection of Heaven as unbounded, here in Oxford, in the very stronghold of his enemies, as it had been when exposed to the jeers of the mob in the pillory at Newgate, or on the scaffold at Tower-hill under the knife of the executioner. With Leighton, as with many others who come from the northern side of the Tweed, the characteristic caution of his countrymen was completely overborne and nullified by that religious enthusiasm which takes such a powerful hold of the

Scottish character ; and although in trifling matters, such as the preparations for his own and Effingham's journey, about which he proceeded to busy himself, it produced a degree of forethought highly advantageous to a proscribed fugitive, it never checked him for an instant in the prosecution of any enterprise, however desperate, on which he thought his religion bade him embark.

With the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, he, and thousands such as he, were indeed invincible. So he hurried off to the stables, and saw to the feeding of his own and Effingham's steeds, and looked carefully to the arms of fleshly warfare which were too likely to be needed ; nor did he neglect those creature comforts, without which saint and sinner must equally faint by the way on a long journey, doing everything in a spirit of trustful confidence, that all the dangers and sufferings he had already passed through were powerless to shake.

And Effingham watched the stars die out one by one in the sky. The deep-toned clocks of the different colleges striking the morning hours each after each, smote with a dull, unmeaning sound upon his ear. His preparations for the journey were completed, and his apartment, never luxuriously furnished, was indeed cheerless and uncomfortable. His eye wandered round its bare walls, and took no heed. A few withered flowers, fresh and fragrant a week ago—stay, could it be only a *week* ago?—stood in a drinking-cup on the chimney-piece. He had begged them of Grace at her father's house ; and indeed she had given them somewhat unwillingly. They caught his

attention now—they looked so faded and unhappy. He started like a man who wakes up from a dream. Then he saw it all before him, as though he was standing by, a careless spectator: the wounded youth on the sofa, the graceful womanly forms gliding about the room, his own stately figure erect by the low window, and the soft sweet face, with star-like eyes—the face that stood between his soul and its salvation—the face without which, Satan whispered in his ear, eternal glory itself would be no heaven to him.

He seized his hat and cloak, girded on his rapier, and rushed forth into the street. A chill, moist wind, moaning through the leafless trees, and round the pinnacles of the cathedral-towers, blew refreshingly in his face. The first streaks of dawn were already lightening the sky. A new day was breaking, with its store of sorrows and anxieties and troubles, and its leavening of hope. He drew a long, full breath of the fresh air, he walked faster now, and the colour mounted to his cheek. He would stand under Grace's windows once again, and though he would not see her face, yet his spirit would bid her farewell. He was a strong, practical man once, ay, not many weeks ago; and now he could find relief, like any pitiful, sighing swain, in pacing a muddy street, and staring at a closed shutter. Something of his former self rose within him as he smiled in scorn, but the smile was too near akin to tears not to soften him; and soon he thought that, however contemptible such abject devotion might be in other cases, Grace was worth it all; so he would

watch here for awhile, and this should be his leave-taking.

Again the proud spirit rose—the master-will that would not be denied. Speculating vaguely on the future, a long vista seemed to open before him of fame and patriotism; and the triumph of religious freedom wrought out by the efforts of himself and such as he. Her party would fail; it *must* yield to the voice of the country—the strong power of right. George Effingham, one of the pillars of the State, one of the Councillors of England, might aspire to the broken-down Cavalier's daughter. *Aspire*, forsooth! it would be condescension, then. Still, she would always be a queen to him. Prejudice and party-feeling would vanish before the light of Truth. Sir Giles would respect the stout, successful soldier, though an enemy and a conqueror; the sage, conscientious statesman, though a rebel to the Crown. *She* could not say him nay, after years of absence and constancy, after fame had been won to do her honour, and victory achieved for her sake. Then the bright day would dawn at last; the dream that is dreamed by all,—to be realized by how many?—the magic presence, the golden sunshine, and the happy home. If he could but see her just once again! One more draught to slake that thirst which, like the longing of the dram-drinker, grows the fiercer for indulgence, which unsatisfied, leaves but a dreary and shattered existence for the slave of its moral intoxication. If he could only take away with him for his long, long absence one more look, he would ask for nothing besides, not so much as a kind word: it would be enough to see her, and so depart upon his cheerless way.

He started, and turned pale. It was already nearly light. The shutter was unclosed, and a hand from within the chamber drew aside the blind.

At the same instant, the tramp of horses was heard clattering up the street. Effingham, who had good reasons of his own for not wishing to be recognised, shrunk aside to take shelter in the deep archway of a college-gate. He was invisible to the two horsemen as they rode by. Cloaked and booted, it was no easy task to recognise the form or features of either of those cavaliers. Quick and sharp as is the glance of jealousy, it is far behind the intuitive perception of love. A pair of dark eyes that had not slept all night, were peering out from behind those curtains into the chill, dull morning; they recognised in the leading horseman the person of Humphrey Bosville, long ere George, under his archway, had decided in his own mind that the strong shapely sorrel, with his light true action, was none other than his comrade's well-known charger. A thrill of mingled feelings shot through him as they passed. Something within told him that the hand he had seen at the window belonged to Grace. It was a galling and a bitter thought that the woman he loved should have thus kept her vigil to obtain a farewell glimpse of another; but there was comfort in the reflection that the other was even now, like himself, bound on a long and dangerous journey, from which perhaps he might never return; and though he could not conceal from himself the attachment, which his own observation had told him was springing up in Grace's heart for his young and handsome brother officer, he took com-

fort in reflecting on all those sage aphorisms so rife amongst the male sex, which turn upon the fickle disposition of woman, and her insatiable love of change—aphorisms which, whether just or unjust, are as gall and wormwood to the successful lover.

Insensibly, a kindly feeling sprang up in him towards his open-hearted, unconscious rival. He would fain have shaken hands with him, and bidden him farewell; but even as the impulse arose, the white hand was withdrawn, the curtain fell once more, and the two horsemen turned the corner of the street, and disappeared.

With one longing look at the casement, with a prayer upon his lips, and his strong heart aching with a strange, dull pain, George Effingham took his silent, solitary farewell of the only thing he cared for upon earth, and went his way drearily into the desert.

Weep on! pretty Grace; turning your pale cheek down towards your pillow, and shedding the hot tears thick and fast, that you need not be ashamed of now, for you are alone. Weep on, and so calm and soothe your wounded spirit, and hush it off to sleep, and teach it that for it, as for any other babe, 'care comes with waking as light comes with day.' Good Sir Giles, snoring healthily on the floor beneath you, little dreams that his bonnie Grace, whom he remembers a year or two ago a prattling child, whom he still persists in considering a mere girl, is broad awake within a few yards of him, waging the fierce battle that is to teach her the veritable lesson how to struggle and endure. A woman's passions and a woman's pride are making wild work in yonder quiet

chamber with the prostrate sufferer. The light streams in broader and broader, deepening into day, and every minute of daylight takes him farther and farther on his journey.

Weep on! it will do you good. And be thankful that you *can* weep. Pray that the time may never come for you when the fire that wastes blood and brain alike, leaves the eyes dry. Weep on! nor believe that you are the only sufferer. He, too, has left his heart behind him, but not with you, pretty Grace—not with you.

Bosville, too, had looked back at the house which contained all he loved, ere he turned the corner of the street. By this time, he knew his mistress so well that he did not expect so much as the wave of a handkerchief to cheer him on his journey, and yet he was disappointed too that she made no sign.

Mary Cave had prayed for him long and earnestly ere she slept. When he passed beneath her window she was dreaming of the roses that had faded away last autumn; and Falkland stood with her on the terrace at Boughton once more.

It was sad to awake to cold reality from such a dream.

CHAPTER XVIII.

'SAUVE QUI PEUT.'

THE sorrel was fresh and lively after his long rest; he snorted and shook his head, ringing his bridle playfully in the clear frosty air, as though he too enjoyed the music that he made. Dymocke, albeit he had much improved his opportunities during his interval of repose at Oxford, was yet a man of ambition in a quiet way, fond of adventure, as is often the case with these dry, immovable natures, and as he set by no means too low a value on his own worth, he was not unwilling to impose upon pretty Faith a little more anxiety, a little more uncertainty, ere he yielded his grim person altogether a captive to her charms. 'A young man,' quoth Dymocke, 'must not think of settling too early in life.' It was a clear bright morning, the white hoar frost of early winter was rapidly evaporating in the sunshine; a few straggling leaves, withered up by the nipping air, still elung to tree and coppice; the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, all the sounds of a rural and cultivated district, came shrill and sharp through the rarefied atmosphere upon the ear; the partridge whirred away from her sedgy, grass-grown covert by the wayside; the horses' hoofs rang cheerily on the road. Humphrey's spirits rose as he trotted along

health and strength seemed to enter at every pore, as he breathed the pure cold air: the future looked bright and promising before him now. The sorrel moved lightly and nimbly along as he sat well down in his demi-pique saddle, swaying easily to every motion of his favourite: it seemed that with his sword in his hand and his good horse under him, there was no task he would shrink to undertake, no prize he did not feel man enough to win.

Honest Dymocke, too, was in his highest spirits and his best of humours. When in such a happy frame of mind his discourse, like that of a provident soldier, was apt to turn upon the victualling department, and to this topic he reverted again and again, dropping behind at intervals to pursue his own reflections undisturbed, and anon riding up alongside of his master to pour the result of his cogitations in his ear.

'The Pied Bull at the next hamlet is an excellent hostelry both for man and beast,' quoth Dymocke, who prided himself on his knowledge of such matters, much as a 'courier' of the present day would deem it incumbent on him to point out the most fashionable hotel. 'Their oats weigh over two score the bushel; the hay is won off the uplands just above the hamlet, clean and dry and sweet as a nut; there's a turkey and chine, I'll warrant me, against Christmas in the larder; and as for the ale, why ever since the war times they've brewed it with a double strike of malt to the hogshead, on purpose, as they say, for the Cavaliers! I know it, master, for the hostess is a kinswoman of my own, though for the matter of that

“the Puritans like it stiffish as well,” quoth Nance; “and I’d rather keep a regiment of Cavaliers for a month,” says she, “than a troop of Waller’s knaves for a fortnight!” Ah, she’s honest, is Nance, and a buxom lass, too, or *was,*’ added Dymocke, with a grim retrospective leer, ‘afore she was buckled to old Giles Leatherhead.’

‘It will make our journey to-day over short,’ replied Humphrey absently, for his heart was at that moment many a mile away from good Dame Leatherhead. ‘No, Hugh, there is no time to be lost; we must push on while daylight lasts,’ and he tightened his rein as he spoke, and urged the sorrel forward at a rapid trot. He was already in imagination at Goring’s head quarters, assuming the command to which his lately attained rank would entitle him, and furthering to the best of his abilities the great work which he connected in his own mind with the ever-recurring motto, ‘Loyalty before all.’

This pushing on, however, is a process of much difficulty and some disappointment when the traveller is provided with no relays of horses, and it is necessary to keep his own beast fresh and strong for future services. Roads get deep and muddy as the day wanes and the frost melts, miles seem to lengthen themselves out, and hill and dale unexpectedly diversify the surface of a country that the wayfarer has hitherto believed to be a dead flat. The steed that never before would trot less than nine miles an hour without pressing, sinks shamelessly to seven, and clinks his feet against each other in a manner most distressing to the nerves of his rider and jarring to

his ear. Just as darkness falls a shoe is nearly certain to come off, and as surely the blacksmith in the next village turns out to be drunk or absent, perhaps both. Then at a place where two ways meet, if there be any doubt it is odds that the traveller takes the wrong direction, and though he soon discovers his error and turns back grumbling if not swearing, the distance has been lost and the daylight too. Bosville's journey was no exception to the general rule. Notwithstanding his impatience, he was forced to listen to the counsels of his servant, which, though delivered in that person's quaint and oracular style, were not without sense and forethought.

'The country hereabouts is "honest,"' observed Dymocke, 'so we may travel slowly and run no risk. If we stay all night at the Pied Bull, we can refresh ourselves and rest our horses well after their first day's journey. To-morrow we shall be ready for whatever turns up; and to-morrow, master, before we can reach Goring, we must pass under the very noses of Waller's outposts. There are hawks abroad all over Gloucestershire, and we may have to fight, ay, and perhaps ride, for our lives before the sun sets. I like a fresh horse better than a tired one either way, and my kinswoman is a decent dame and a comely, and yonder swings the Bull, and the sun will be down in an hour—think better of it, master, and stop while you can.'

A dark threatening cloud, heavy with a whole lapful of winter's rain, seconded Dymocke's arguments so forcibly that his master yielded to his entreaties and put up for the night at the friendly hostelry,

where, it is but justice to the Pied Bull to record, he was regaled on the best of fare, and won golden opinions from his buxom hostess, whose interest in her own kinsman, his grim serving-man, was largely shared by the handsome Cavalier major.

An hour after daybreak Bosville was in the saddle once more, his reckoning was paid, Dymocke was bringing his own horse from the stable, everything was prepared for departure, when Dame Leatherhead, looking very handsome in her Sunday bodice and striped stuff petticoat, with her silver holiday earrings large and weighty in her ears, made her appearance with the stirrup-cup in her hand, which she mounted on the horse-block to administer in due form. As Humphrey received it with a kindly smile of thanks and put it to his lips, the fair hostess whispered in his ear, 'Waller lies within six miles of us, at "The Ashes." Bold Prince Rupert beat up their quarters, and took seventeen of their horses o' Monday last. The rebels are up and stirring like a wasp's nest. Ride with your beard over your shoulder, and make for the river at Little Fordham-bridge. If you can cross there you're safe, for Goring's "hell-babes" have got a post on the opposite bank, and whenever you come this way again don't ye forget the Pied Bull and old Giles Leatherhead and his dame, and so good speed ye, and fare ye well.' The young Major thanked her heartily for her counsel and spurred on, while Dame Leatherhead jumped down from the horse-block with rather a disappointed look on her comely features, and watched the retreating horsemen out of

sight. Far be it from us to attribute motives to any of that inexplicable sex for which we profess so deep a reverence, or to speculate on the whims concealed beneath a bodice, the flights of fancy that originate under maiden's snood or matron's cap. We would only venture to hint that a time-honoured custom in the seventeenth century permitted without scandal the process of osculation to take place in all such ceremonies as welcomes, leave-takings, and the administering of stirrup-cups; and to remark, not without reproval, that Humphrey's inadvertence neglected to take advantage of this liberality, notwithstanding the convenient proximity of a willing hostess on a horse-block to a departing Cavalier in the saddle. That such a salute was expected we do not presume to infer, but merely remark as an additional instance of the uncertainty of the female temper, that Dame Leather-head was shorter with old Giles and sharper with her maids than usual during the whole subsequent forenoon.

With their flints carefully examined, their swords loose in the scabbard, and their horses well in hand, the two Cavaliers rode on in silent vigilance, keenly scanning every copse and hedgerow, and peering anxiously over every rising ground as they approached it. The way was somewhat difficult to find, crossed as it was by several narrow lanes in the low country, and occasionally merging into half a dozen separate tracks on the down. The river, however, lay visible at a considerable distance below them, and they were descending the last hill into the vale which it fer-

tilized, and congratulating themselves on having so satisfactorily performed the greater part of their march, when a ball singing over their heads, followed by the report of a musketoon, and the sudden appearance of half a dozen bright head-pieces flashing above a rising ground on their flank, startled them from their security, and made them disagreeably aware that their safety was more likely to depend on the speed of their horses and the erring aim of their adversaries than on their own good swords, out-numbered as they saw themselves three or four to one.

Like that of his master, Dymocke's first impulse, to do him justice, was always for fighting, right or wrong. He counted the enemy in a twinkling: 'Six—seven—eight, and a corporal. Shall we turn and show our teeth, Major, or set spurs and show them our heels?' said honest Hugh, his long lean countenance unmoved as usual, and a gleam of grim humour in his eye. 'No use, Hugh,' answered his master. 'Four to one! Sound a gallop and make for the bridge. Keep close to me; we can always fight if we have to turn.' As he spoke he struck spurs into the sorrel, and sped away down the hill at a good hand gallop, closely followed by his servant, and pursued with a loud cheer by the party of Parliamentary cavalry, of whom ever and anon some godly warrior would halt and dismount, taking a long shot with his musketoon at the diminishing forms of the fugitives, over the heads of his own comrades, to whom indeed the angry missile was far more dangerous than to the Malignants it was intended to reach.

'Hold up!' exclaimed Humphrey, as the sorrel

cleared a high wall, with a drop into a sandy lane which promised to shelter them somewhat from the fire of their pursuers. ‘Hold up!’ echoed Hugh as the bay landed gallantly behind his stable companion. ‘Trapped at last!’ he added. ‘Look yonder, master,’ and Bosville, following the direction of his glance, beheld to his dismay at the bottom of the hill a whole troop of Waller’s well-armed cavalry, commanded by an officer whose gaudy-coloured garments, flashing breast-plate, and orange scarf, were plainly discernible, and who was even then employed in sending out ‘flankers’ on each side of the lane to stop the fugitives should they attempt to emerge over its deep embankment. This, however, was impracticable. To get in was a fair leap for a good horse; to get out would have required the agility of a deer. There was but one chance left, and Bosville’s practised eye saw it in an instant.

‘We must go slap through those fellows, Dymocke,’ he said, setting his teeth a little, and settling himself in the saddle as a horseman does when about to encounter a large fence. ‘Take fast hold of your horse’s head, and when we get within twenty yards, send him at it as hard as you can lay legs to the ground!’

So speaking he drew his sword, waved it round his head, and shouting ‘God and the King!’ galloped pell-mell into the leading files of the enemy, knocking over the first trooper he encountered with the very impetus of his charge, delivering so vicious a thrust at a second as sent him down amongst the horses’ legs with six inches of steel through his mid-

riff, and dealing a swinging sabre-cut at a third as he passed him that would have laid his back open from shoulder to loin had he been provided with no other defences than his stout buff coat and his faith in the righteousness of his cause. It was well for 'Ebenezer the Gideonite'* that he carried his short horseman's musketoon slung across his back. The iron barrel of the weapon turned the edge of the sabre as it fell, and though Humphrey's blow was delivered with such goodwill as to knock the Parliamentarian on to his horse's neck, he sustained no further damage from the encounter, and passed on unscathed, to turn rein once more, and assume the offensive.

Humphrey shot through the first division of his enemy as a sportsman of modern times crashes through a Northamptonshire bull-finch, but he had to do with an adversary skilled in all the wiles of war; and Harrison, for it was no less a person that commanded the opposing party, had calculated on this characteristic rush of the impetuous Cavalier, and taken his measures accordingly. So with his horse blown, the momentum of his charge expended, and his servant separated from him in the *mêlée*, Humphrey found himself surrounded by a fresh dozen of troopers, with swords drawn, pistols cocked, and calm defiant looks of conscious strength that seemed to say escape was hopeless and resistance impossible.

In a twinkling his sword was beaten down, his bridle seized, his arms pinioned, a stalwart trooper on

* Like Indian 'braves,' these sanctified warriors boasted each his *nom de guerre*.

either hand threatening instant death if he attempted further violence, which was indeed physically impossible; and thus, breathless, exhausted, and a prisoner, he was brought before the officer in command of the party who had taken him.

Harrison was more of the soldier than the saint. Of a goodly presence, commanding figure, and honest expression of countenance, his appearance formed a pleasing contrast to that of many who drew the sword by his side. He was not above the vanities of dress, and with a short velvet *montero* floating over his new buff coat, an orange scarf richly fringed about his waist, and a burnished helmet adorned with a drooping feather upon his head, his exterior presented an air of military coxcombrity by no means common amongst the ranks of the Presbyterians. He affected, too, the *bon camarade* in his manners, and greeted his prisoner with an off-hand soldierlike cordiality that seemed to make no account of the prejudices of party and the chances of war.

'Take a pull at my flask, young sir,' he said, heartily and good-humouredly, offering at the same time a horn measure of excellent brandy, which he drew from one of his holsters, and which balanced an ominous-looking horse-pistol in the other. 'Get your breath, give up your despatches, tell me your name and rank, and we'll make you as comfortable as we can under the circumstances.'

Humphrey answered courteously, and looking anxiously round for Dymocke, begged to know whether his servant had been slain in the affray. Harrison laughed outright. 'The knave has got

clear off, Major Bosville,' said he; 'not one of my bunglers here could either catch him for speed, or drop him at a long shot. "'Tis a pity, too,' he added reflectively, 'I should like to have had that bay horse. Fairfax would have given me any price I chose to ask for him. And now, sir, your despatches, if you please. Unbind the gentleman, you knaves! My fellows are rough valets, Major; but you will excuse the fortune of war.'

Humphrey was obliged to submit with a good grace. He had one consolation in his disasters. Dymocke possessed a duplicate set of these despatches; and Dymocke, he had every reason to hope, was safe, so he bore his misfortunes with an outward air of cheerful indifference, and won golden opinions of Harrison accordingly.

'You have been lately wounded, you say,' observed the latter as he rode alongside of his prisoner, whom he had ordered his men to unbind, and for whose security the practised soldier relied on his own quick eye and ready hand, which never strayed far from the sorrel's head. 'Faith, you look pale and weak, and sit your horse as though you had had nearly enough. That was a gallant dash too of yours. If I hadn't expected it you might have got clear off. Ay, you're all alike, you officers of Prince Rupert. Undeniable at a dash, but you don't rally well after your first charge. There are but three cavalry officers in England: Cromwell's one, old Leslie's another, and I'll leave you to guess the third. My service to you, Major Bosville. Take another pull at the flask.'

Humphrey declined the proffered courtesy, and his

captor drank to him with an air of much satisfaction. He wiped his beard and moustaches on a delicate laced handkerchief after his draught, and resumed his discourse.

'You have a short ride before you to-day; but if you are too weak to proceed I will order half an hour's halt for rest and refreshment. No? Well, you'll have plenty of time to rest yourself now for a while. Bah! what is it after all?—a month or two, and then an exchange of prisoners, and you are free. You and I may meet again in the field before long; and I promise you I won't forget the charge down the lane, and the swinging blow you lent "Ebenezer" yonder, though 'twas but the flat of the sword. See, the knave rides with his back up even now. It stings him, I'll be sworn. Meantime, another hour will bring us in sight of Gloucester; and to Gloucester, Major Bosville, it is my duty to conduct you as a prisoner. When we near the town, I shall be unwillingly compelled to have you bound once more.'

In effect, a couple of hours' ride diversified by such light soldier's talk as the above, chequered in Humphrey's mind with many a sad and bitter reflection, brought them to the gates of the godly town. Here the commander called a halt for the purpose of again pinioning his prisoner (an operation which he good-naturedly insisted should be done as lightly as possible), and getting his men into order for their entrance. The sanctified inhabitants of Gloucester being rigid disciplinarians in all military matters, and moreover somewhat sore at present from the recent visits of Prince Rupert almost to the walls

of the town, any laxity of discipline or appearance of indulgence towards a prisoner would have called down upon Harrison the strictures of the townsmen and the reproofs of his superior officers.

As they rode up the principal street, the population seemed to have turned out for the express purpose of sharing in the triumph of the Parliamentary's capture. Angry brows were bent, and bitter texts of scripture levelled at the captive 'Malignant.' Grim, sour-faced elders, clad in sombre colours, pointed the finger, and gibed at him as he passed, launching into far-fetched anathemas drawn from the Old Testament, and comparing the young Cavalier major, in a somewhat ludicrous and disrespectful manner, to every reprobate mentioned in holy writ. Little children came out and spat at him with precocious virulence; and rancorous old dames sharpened their shrill tongues, and kept them, so to speak, edged and pointed for domestic use upon this fortuitous whetstone. Only some of the younger and fairer daughters of Eve demonstrated feelings of natural interest in the captive. His pale, handsome face, graceful figure, and long dark curls, were meet objects for compassion; and 'Malignant' as he was, glances were cast upon him as he rode by from the blackest and brownest and bluest eyes in Gloucester, of mingled pity and admiration, not always undimmed by tears.

A low stone archway, flanked by a long dismal building that had all the appearance of a guard-room, and watched by two grim and warlike sentinels, received the prisoner. Satisfied that he will be well cared for, and not suffered to escape, we must here

take leave of Major Bosville, and cast a retrospective glance at the fortunes of his faithful servant, the redoubtable Dymocke.

Mounted on a high-couraged and excellent horse, that experienced warrior had no difficulty in keeping pace with his master in the headlong charge which well nigh carried them both right through the Parliamentary party.

Riding on the Major's bridle-hand, he took his share of the buffets that were flying about somewhat at a disadvantage, yet with his usual coolness and philosophy. His head-piece was fortunately thick and strong, the skull it defended by no means of soft materials, and the arm which should cover both, practised in every feint and trick of consummate swordsmanship. The cudgel-play of Old England was no bad training for the use of the sabre, and many a broken scone had Dymocke inflicted on his rustic adversaries in more peaceful times. It was only when he saw his master surrounded and helpless, that the idea of escape, and the responsibility of his own duplicate despatches flashed across his mind.

Quick as thought, he espied a gap in the wall which flanked the deep narrow lane wherein the skirmish had taken place, and forcing his horse vigorously up the bank, he gained once more the open fields, and put his head straight for the bridge, now but a few hundred yards distant. With shout and cheer and the thunder of horses' hoofs ringing behind him, diversified by an occasional random shot whistling over his head, he sped down to the river, gaining at every stride upon his pursuers—for not a

trooper in Waller's division could hold his own for speed with the gallant bay—and so reached the bridge with a fair start, and at least half a dozen of the enemy pretty close upon his heels.

‘Confusion! they’ve broke it down,’ muttered the fugitive to himself, as he neared the dismantled masonry, and saw that a huge gap had been left in the middle arch which spanned the stream; ‘this is Goring’s work, I’ll be bound! Aye, he never throws a chance away. Well, it’s “over shoes over boots now,” and sink or swim, I wont give in for the fear of a ducking!’

Thus muttering, and taking his despatches from his breast to place them in his head-piece, he slid cautiously down the bank, and leaning his weight forward upon his horse’s neck, forced the good animal into the stream. That which he had thought would prove his destruction turned out to be his salvation. The Puritans, who had made sure of their prey when he reached the broken bridge, shrunk from following him into the deep and treacherous river. With an angry shout they pulled up and fired a parting volley at him from the brink.

With characteristic coolness Dymocke halted on the opposite shore to dismount and wring the wet from his dripping garments; then, waving his disappointed enemies an ironical farewell, he trotted leisurely on in the direction of General Goring’s headquarters.

Here as elsewhere in the ranks of the Cavaliers, laxity of discipline, and, to use a military term which carries with it its own signification, a general *slack-*

ness, seemed to pervade all alike, from the chief to the trumpeter, neutralizing the courage and abilities which were so conspicuous in the Royal army, and giving to their stricter and better-trained foes an incalculable advantage. When Dymocke drew rein at the door of the General's quarters, the very sentry on duty seemed flustered with his noonday draught, and lounged about his post with an air of roystering joviality scarcely in accordance with Hugh's ideas of military etiquette, although he lent a ready ear to the new arrival's request to see Lord Goring forthwith, and even proffered an invitation to stroll away with him to the guard-room for something to drink, and so avoid the enormity of delivering his message dry-lipped. In the general's ante-room a couple of young Cavaliers were fulfilling their duties as 'aides-de-camp' by shaking a dice-box with alarming energy, applying themselves meanwhile to a tankard that stood between them with impartial zeal. Goring himself, sitting in a luxurious apartment—for he had as usual taken the best house in the village, the property of a Puritan lawyer, for his own residence—was unbraced and slippereed, surrounded by piles of papers, writing nevertheless with all his natural facility, yet quaffing ever and anon deep draughts from a large silver measure at his elbow, seeking, as it seemed in vain, to quench the feverish thirst left by his last night's debauch.

'Ha! my late antagonist's servant,' exclaimed the General, who never forgot a face, as he never remembered a debt; 'I may say my late antagonist himself. 'Slife, man, I have never paid thee the cudgelling I

owe thee ; some of my knaves, doubtless, will take it off my hands ! But what dost here ?—dripping, too, like a water-dog. Keep thy distance, man, and deliver up thy papers. Sure 'tis not another cartel from the young feather-brain !

Dymocke knew his place right well, and feared neither man nor devil, or he had hesitated ere he presented himself to a general of division in his own quarters, whom he had struck so shrewdly with an oaken cudgel some few weeks before. He delivered his papers, taking them out of his head-piece, where they had remained perfectly dry (a piece of caution not unremarked by Goring, whom nothing escaped,) in severe and soldierlike silence, and stood gaunt and dripping at 'attention' till the latter had concluded their perusal. Twice he read them over with careful avidity, impressing them as it were indelibly on his memory, and then looked up and laughed outright at the solemn figure before him.

'And what brought thee here, knave?' he inquired ; 'is thy master killed, or wounded, or taken prisoner? Hath he learned to parry that thrust in tierce yet, or hath he been practising his swordsmanship anew amongst the Roundheads? What brought thee here, and how came these letters in thy hands?'

Still erect and rigid, Dymocke detailed to him in a few words the events of the skirmish, and his own escape from Waller's pursuing cavalry. Goring listened with an expression of interest and approval on his face.

'Thou hast done well !' he said, at the conclusion of Dymocke's narrative ; 'I will forgive thee the debt

I owe thee in consideration of thy ready service. 'Tis not every trooper would have thought of keeping his papers dry, with Waller's saints singing "glory" behind him. Let me see thee here again to-morrow at noon. Thy master shall be looked to. 'Tis a cockerel of the game, and will fly a fair pitch when his pin-feathers are grown. Zounds! I had better spared many a better man, than that mettled lad with his smooth face. Ho! without there—D'Arcy, Langdale!—bid them take this knave to the guard-room, ration his horse, and give himself a drench of brandy, to dry him within and without. Order up Master Quillet's housekeeper with another measure of burnt sack, and let no one else disturb me till supper time.'

So Goring went back to his correspondence; and Dymocke, nothing loth, found himself before a huge measure of brandy and a roaring fire in the guard-room, surrounded by a circle of admiring comrades, listening open-mouthed to his exploits, and to whom he fully indemnified himself for the brevity of his narrative as reported to their busy General.

CHAPTER XIX.

‘THE NEWS THAT FLIES APACE.’

DEEPER and deeper still, Mary Cave found herself engulfed in the whirlpool of political intrigue. Almost the only courtier of the Queen’s party who united activity of brain to uncompromising resolution, who was capable of strong effort and sound reflection, unwarpd and unfettered by the promptings of self-interest, she had insensibly become the principal link that connected the policy of Merton College with the wiser counsels of the King’s honest advisers. It was no womanly office she thus found herself compelled to undertake. False as is the position of a mediator between parties neither of whom are essentially quite sincere, it becomes doubly so when that mediator is one of the softer sex. She must guide the helm with so skilful a hand, she must trim the boat with so careful an eye; she must seize her opportunities so deftly, or make them so skilfully; and through it all she must exercise so jealous a vigilance over her own weaknesses, and even her own reputation, distinguishing so nicely between public duty and private feeling—doing such constant violence to her own affections and her own prejudices—that it is not too much to say nothing *but* a woman is capable of reconciling all these conflicting necessities into one harmonious whole. Yet it is not

womanly to encourage admirers up to a certain point, in order to obtain their secrets, and then make use of them for a political purpose; it is not womanly to promote likings and dislikings between individuals of opposite sexes, or otherwise, for the furtherance of a State intrigue; it is not womanly to be in correspondence with half a dozen ambitious and unprincipled men, some of them profligates whose very names in connexion with a lady were sufficient to blast her fair fame for ever; and it is not womanly to have but one object in life, to which duty, inclination, happiness must be sacrificed, and that object a political one.

Mary sat reading her letters on the very sofa that Bosville had occupied during his convalescence in Sir Giles Allonby's house at Oxford. It was a day off duty with the Queen, and she had come to spend it with her kind old kinsman and his daughter. The two ladies were alone; and contrary to their wont, an unbroken silence, varied only by the pattering of a dismal winter rain against the window, was preserved between them. Grace sat musing over her work, and seemed buried in thought. She looked paler and thinner than usual, and her eye had lost the merry sparkle that used so to gladden Sir Giles. It was less like her mother's now, so thought the old knight; and his heart bounded after all those years to reflect how that mother had never known sorrow, and had told him on her death-bed that 'she was sure she was only taken away because her lot in this world had been too happy.' Ay! you may well laugh on, Sir Giles, and troll out your loyal old songs,

and drink and ride and strike for the King! Roys-tering, careless, war-worn veteran as you seem to be, there are depths in that stout old heart of yours that few have sounded; and when 'little Gracey' is settled and provided for, you care not how soon you go to join that gentle, loving lady, whom you still see many and many a night in your dreams, walking in her white dress in the golden summer evenings under the lime-trees at home; whom your simple faith persuades you you shall look on again with the same angel-face, to part from never more. And where is the Sadducee that shall say you nay?

Meantime, Sir Giles is drilling a newly raised levy of cavalry on Bullington Common, notwithstanding the wet; and Grace sits pensive over her work; and Mary reads her letters with a flushed cheek and a contracted brow, and a restless unquiet look in her deep blue eye that has got there very often of late, and that denotes anything but repose of mind. Suddenly she starts and turns pale as she peruses one elaborately-written missive, scented and silk-bound, and inscribed 'These for Mistress Mary Cave. Ride, ride, ride!' according to the polite manner of the time. A look of consummate scorn passes over her features as she reads it through once more, but her face is still white, and she drops it from her hand upon the carpet, unmarked by her pre-occupied companion. Here it is:—

'These for Mistress Mary Cave.

'GENTLE MISTRESS MARY—

'Deign to accept the heartfelt good wishes, none

the less sincere for that the heart hath been pierced and mangled by the glances of your bright eyes, of the humblest of your slaves; and scorn not at the same time to vouchsafe your favour and interest to one who, languishing to be parted from so much beauty as he hath left at Oxford, and specially at Merton College, where Mistress Mary reigns second to none, still endeavoureth to fulfil his duty religiously to the King, and to her Majesty, as Mistress Mary esteems to be the *devoir* of a knight who hath placed himself under her very feet. The good cause in which it is my pride that we are fellow-labourers, languisheth somewhat here in Gloucestershire, more from want of unity in counsel than from any lack of men and munitions of war in the field. Would his blessed Majesty but vouchsafe to confer upon your knight and slave a separate and independent command, it is not too much to say that it would be in my power to make short work and a speedy account of Waller, who lieth with a goodly force of cavalry within ten miles of me. It was but last Monday that a small body of my "lambs," taking their orders directly from myself, beat up his quarters within a mile of Gloucester, and drove off seventeen of his horses, besides considerable spoil, of which I thought the less as compared with that which might be done but for the impracticable nature of the Commander-in-Chief. Gentle Mistress Mary! it would not be unbecoming in you to implore our gracious and passionately-adored Queen to hint to his blessed Majesty that I do indeed but desire to receive my orders under his own hand, as I should in this wise have more

authority to guide the council of the army thereby to obedience ; and as my requests are mostly denied out-of-hand by Prince Rupert, at whose disposal nevertheless I remain for life and death, as his Majesty's nephew and loving kinsman, I would humbly beg a positive order from his Majesty for my undertakings, to dispose the officers more cheerfully to conduct them, and to assure his Majesty that the least intimation of his pleasure is sufficient to make me run through all manner of difficulties and hazard to perform my duty, and to prove myself entirely and faithfully devoted to his sacred service. As Mistress Mary hath the key to the heart of our beauteous and beloved Sovereign, whose will must ever be law with all who come within the sphere of her enchantments, methinks that a word spoken in season under the roof of Merton College will more than fulfil all my most ardent desires, and leave me nothing to grieve for save that which must ever cause me to languish in hopeless sorrow—the adoration which it is alike my pride and grief to entertain for the fairest and proudest dame that adorns our English Court.

‘ From intelligence I receive at sure and friendly hands, I learn that Wilmot is wavering ; and some speech is even abroad of a treasonable correspondence with Essex, and an intercepted letter from Fairfax, which is to be laid before the Council.

‘ Such treachery would merit a summary dismissal from his office, and clemency in this case could scarcely be extended to an officer of so high a rank.

‘ Digby, too, is far from being unsuspected ; and

should these two commands become vacant, it would be a fertile opportunity for the uniting of his Majesty's whole body of horse under one independent head, acting conjointly with Prince Rupert, who would still remain Commander-in-Chief, but deriving his authority direct from the hand of his blessed Majesty himself.

'Should events work in this direction, I can safely confide in your discretion to select a proper time at which to whisper in the Queen's ear the humble name of, sweet Mistress Mary,

'Your most passionately-devoted and faithful knight
and humble slave,

'GEORGE GORING.

'*Post scriptum.*—The despatches alluded to in 106 Cipher have arrived. They are duplicate, and were delivered to me yesterday by an honest serving-man, who narrowly escaped with his life and his letters from a party of Waller's horse.

'His master, it seems, was sorely wounded, and led off prisoner into Gloucester. This is of less account as his despatches are in cipher, and the duplicates are safe. He is one Master Bosville, with whom I am personally well acquainted, and whom Mistress Mary may deign to remember when lying wounded by the weapon of her own true knight and slave.

'He is a good officer, and a mettlesome lad too. I would fain have him back with us, but have nothing to exchange against him but a couple of scriveners and a canting Puritan divine; the latter I shall probably hang. Once more—Fare thee well!'

It was the *post scriptum*, written in her correspondent's own natural off-hand style, and very different from the stilted and exaggerated form of compliment and inuendo contained in the body of the letter, which drove the blood from Mary's cheek, and caused her bosom to heave so restlessly beneath her bodice, her slender foot to beat so impatiently upon the floor. Wounded and a prisoner!—and this so soon after his illness, when weak and scarcely recovered from the consequences of his duel. And it was her doing—hers! whom he loved so madly, the foolish boy!—who counted his life as nothing at the mere wave of her hand. Why was she so eager to get him this majority, for which she had so implored her unwilling and bantering mistress? Why had she sent him off in such a hurry, before he was half recovered, and hardly strong enough to sit upon his horse? And then of course he had fought—so like him! when his servant wisely ran away. And the stern Puritans had struck his weakened frame to the earth! Ah! he was a strong bold horseman when he was well, and a match for the best of them; but now his arm was powerless, though his courage was as high as ever. And perhaps they had slashed his handsome face—how handsome it was! and what kind eyes those were that used to meet hers so timidly and gently—and he was a prisoner—wounded, perhaps dying. And she shut her eyes and fancied she saw him, pale and faint, in his cell—alone, too, all alone. No, that should never be! She picked the letter up, and once more she read it through from beginning to end, scarcely noting the fulsome compliments, the strain

of selfish intrigue, and only dwelling on the ill-omened and distressing *post scriptum* which Goring had written so lightly; but in which, to do him justice, the reckless General showed more feeling than he generally did; and even as she read she would fain have given utterance to her grief, and wrung her hands and wept aloud.

Self-command, however, we need not now observe, was a salient point in Mary Cave's character. Whatever she may have known, or whatever she may have suspected, she looked at Grace's pale face and dejected attitude and held her tongue. There was a sisterly feeling between these two far stronger than was warranted by their actual relationship. Ever since their late intimacy, which had grown closer and closer in the quiet shades of Boughton, Mary had seemed to take care of her gentle friend, Grace in return looking up to her protectress with confiding attachment; and yet there was a secret between them—a secret at which neither ventured to hint, yet with which each could not but suspect the other was acquainted. But they never came to an explanation, notwithstanding. We believe women never do. We believe that, however unreservedly they may confide in a brother, a lover, or a husband, they never lay their hearts completely bare before one of their own sex. Perhaps they are right; perhaps they know each other too well.

There was yet another difficulty in Mary's path, for to succour Bosville at all hazards we need hardly say she had resolved, even on her first perusal of the letter. In whom was she to confide? to whom could

she entrust the secret of his failure and capture without letting the bad news reach Grace's ears? Sir Giles?—the stout old Cavalier never could keep a secret in his life; his child would worm it all out of him the first time she sat on his knee for two minutes after supper. The Queen?—that volatile lady would not only put the very worst construction upon her motives, but would detail the whole of the confidence reposed in her to each of her household separately, under strict promises of secrecy, no doubt, which would be tantamount to a general proclamation by the herald king-at-arms.

Of the courtiers she could scarcely bethink herself of one who was not so busily engaged in some personal and selfish intrigue as to have no room for any other consideration whatsoever, who would not scruple to sacrifice honour and mercy and good feeling merely to score up, so to speak, another point in the game. What to do for Bosville and how to do it—this was the problem Mary had to solve; and resolute as she generally was, full of expedients and fertile in resources, she was now obliged to confess herself fairly at her wit's end.

It so fell out, however, that the blind deity whom men call chance and gods Destiny, who never helps us till we are at the very utmost extremity, befriended Mary through the medium of the very last person about the Court in whom she would have dreamt of confiding—an individual who perhaps was more selfish, intriguing, and reckless than all the rest of the royal circle put together, but who, being a woman, and consequently *born* an angel, had still retained a

scarce perceptible leavening of the celestial nature from which she had fallen.

As Mary sat that evening, pensive and graver than her wont, in the Queen's withdrawing-room, Lady Carlisle crossed the apartment with her calm brow and decorous step, and placed herself by her side. She liked Mary Cave, as far as it was in her nature to like one of her own sex. Perhaps she recognised in Mary somewhat of her own positive character—the uncompromising force of will that, for good or for evil, marches directly on towards its purpose steadfast and unwavering, not to be moved from the path by any consideration of danger or of pity, and like the volume of a mighty river forcing its way through every obstacle with silent energy.

She sat quietly down by Mary's side and heaved a deep sigh, with a sympathizing and plaintive expression of countenance, like a consummate actress as she was.

'It is bad news I have to break to you, Mistress Cave,' she whispered, bending her graceful head over the other's work, 'if indeed you know it not already. That handsome Captain Bosville who was stabbed by Goring has fallen into the hands of the rebels! Jermyn only heard it this evening; I think he is telling the Queen now. They have got him in prison at Gloucester, as far as we can learn. He must be saved by some means. Heaven forefend he should be sacrificed by those villains!'

Mary's heart was full: she could only falter out the word 'exchanged.'

'*Exchanged!*' repeated Lady Carlisle, now thoroughly

in earnest. 'Do you not know—have you not heard? Since they hanged our Irish officers in the north the Council has ordered reprisals. Fairfax, Ireton, Cromwell—all of them are furious. They will hang every Royalist prisoner they take now! It was but last week Prince Rupert strung thirteen Roundheads upon one oak tree: they must have heard of it by this time. Poor Bosville is in the utmost danger. We talked of it but now in the presence-chamber. Even Jermyn is in despair. Alas! 'tis a sad business.'

Mary turned sick and white. Was it even so? The room seemed to spin round with her, and Lady Carlisle's voice was as the rush of many waters in her ear.

'It is hopeless to talk of exchanges,' proceeded her ladyship in a tone of real pity for the too obvious distress of her listener. She had once had a soft place in that corrupted heart, ay, long before she was dazzled with Strafford's fame, or lured by Pym's political influence; before she had sold her lovely womanhood for a coronet, and bartered the peace she could never know again for empty splendour. 'Interest must be made with the Parliament. Some of the rising rebels must be cajoled. Essex is in disgrace with them now, and Essex is of no use, or I had brought the prisoner safe off with my own hand in a week from this day. But they are all alike, my dear, Courtiers and Puritans, generals and statesmen, Cavaliers and Roundheads, all are *men*, weak and vain, all are alike fools, and all are alike to be won. An effort must be made, and we can save him.'

'What would you do?' gasped poor Mary, her self-command now completely deserting her.

'Do!' repeated her ladyship, with her soft lisping voice and dimpled smile; 'I would beg him a free pardon if I dragged Cromwell round the room on my bare knees for it, or die with him,' she added beneath her breath, 'if I really cared one snap of the fingers about the man!'

She was no coward, my Lady Carlisle, and there was more of the tigress about her than the mere beauty of her skin.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MAN OF DESTINY.

IN an open space, long since built over by an increasing population, but forming at the time of which we write alternately a play and drill-ground for the godly inhabitants of Gloucester, is drawn up a regiment of heavy cavalry, singularly well appointed as to all the details of harness and horseflesh which constitute the efficiency of dragoons. The troopers exhibit strength, symmetry, and action, bone to carry the stalwart weight of their riders, and blood to execute the forced marches and rapid evolutions which are the very essence of cavalry tactics. The men themselves are worthy of a close inspection. Picked from the flower of England's yeomanry, from the middle class of farmers and petty squires of the northern and eastern counties, their fine stature and broad shoulders denote that physical strength which independent agricultural labour so surely produces, whilst their stern brows, grave faces, and manly upright bearing, distinguish them from such of their fellows as have not yet experienced the inspiration derived from military confidence mingled with religious zeal. These are the men who are firmly persuaded that on their weapons depends the government of earth and heaven; that they are predestined to

win dominion here and glory hereafter with their own strong arms; that their paradise, like that of the Moslem enthusiast, is to be won sword-in-hand, and that a violent death is the surest passport to eternal life. Fanatics are they, and of the wildest class, but they are also stern disciplinarians. Enthusiasm is a glorious quality, no doubt, but it has seldom turned the tide of a general action when unsupported by discipline: it is the combination of the two that is *invincible*. Thus did the swarms of the great Arab Impostor overrun the fairest portion of Europe, and the chivalrous knights of the Cross charge home with their lances in rest at Jerusalem. Thus in later times were the high-couraged Royalists broken and scattered at Marston Moor, and the tide of victory at Naseby turned to a shameful and irrevocable defeat. Deep as is the influence of religious zeal, doubly as is that man armed who fights under the banner of righteousness, it is over life and not death that it exercises its peculiar sway. A high sense of honour, a reckless spirit of ambition, the romantic enthusiasm of glory, will face shot and steel as fearlessly as the devout confidence of faith; and the drinking, swaggering, unprincipled troopers of Goring, Lunsford, and such as they, for a long time proved a match, and more than a match, for the godly soldiers of the Parliament. It was the 'Threes Right!'—the steady confidence inspired by drill, that turned the scale at last: that confidence and that drill the grim Puritan dragoons are now acquiring on the parade-ground at Gloucester.

They sit their horses as only Englishmen can, the

only seat, moreover, that is at all adapted to the propulsive powers of an English horse, a very different animal from that of any other country. They are armed with long straight cut-and-thrust swords, two-edged and basket-hilted, glittering and sharp as razors, with large horse-pistols of the best locks and workmanship, with the short handy musquetoon, deadly for outpost duty, and hanging readily at the hip. Breastplates and backpieces of steel enhance the confidence inspired by faith, and the men ride to and fro in their armour with the very look and air of invincibles. Yes, these are the Ironsides—the famous Ironsides that turned the destinies of England.

They are drawn up in open column, waiting for the word of command. Their squadrons are dressed with mathematical precision; their distances correct to an inch—woe be to the culprit, officer or soldier, who fails in the most trifling of such *minutiae*. The eye of the commander would discover him in a twinkling—that commander sitting there so square and erect on his good horse. Like all great men, he is not above detail: he would detect a button awry as readily as the rout of a division.

He scans his favourite regiment with a quick, bold, satisfied glance—the glance of a practised workman at his tools. There is no peculiarity in his dress or appointments to distinguish him from a simple trooper, his horse is perhaps the most powerful and the speediest on the ground, and he sits in the saddle with a rare combination of strength and ease; in every other respect his exterior is simple and unremarkable. He even seems to affect a plainness of

attire not far removed from sloth, and in regard to cleanliness of linen and brightness of accoutrements presents a striking contrast to Fairfax, Harrison, and other of the Parliamentary officers, who vie with their Cavalier antagonists in the splendour of their apparel.

It is the man's voice which arrests immediate attention. Harsh and deep, there is yet something so confident and impressive in its tones, that the listener feels at once its natural element is command, ay, command, too, when the emergency is imminent, the storm at its greatest violence. It forces him to scan the features and person of the speaker, and he beholds a square, powerful man of middle stature, loosely and awkwardly made, but in the liberal mould that promises great physical strength, with coarse hands and feet, such as the patrician pretends are never seen in his own race, and with a depth of chest which readily accounts for the powerful tones of that authoritative voice. This vigorous frame is surmounted by a countenance that, without the slightest pretensions to comeliness, cannot but make a deep impression on the beholder. The scoffing Cavaliers may jeer at 'red-nosed Noll,' but Cromwell's face is the face of a great man. The sanguine temperament, which expresses, if we may so speak, the *material* strength of the mind, is denoted by the deep ruddy colouring of the skin. The strong broad jaw belongs to the decided and immovable will of a man of action, capable of carrying out the thoughts that are matured beneath those prominent temples, from which the thin hair is already worn away; and although the nose is somewhat large and full, the mouth somewhat coarse and wide, these distinguishing

characteristics seem less the brand of indulgence and sensuality than the adjuncts of a ripe, manly nature almost always the accompaniment of great physical power. Though the eyes are small and deep-set, they glow like coals of fire; when excited or angered (for the General's temper is none of the sweetest, and he has more difficulty in commanding it than in enforcing the obedience of an army), they seem to flash out sparks from beneath his heavy head-piece. A winning smile is on his countenance now. The Ironsides have executed an 'advance in line' that brings them up even and regular as a wall of steel to his very horse's head, and the reflection steals pleasantly across his mind, that the tools are fit for service at last, that the tedious process of discipline will ere long bring him to the glorious moment of gratified ambition.

A new officer has this moment been appointed to the regiment. He seems thoroughly acquainted with his duty, and manœuvres his squadron with the ready skill of a veteran. Already George Effingham has caught the Puritan look and tone. Already he has made no little progress in Cromwell's good graces. That keen observing eye has discovered a tool calculated to do good service in extremity. A desperate man, bankrupt in earthly hopes, and whose piety is far exceeded by his fanaticism, is no contemptible recruit for the ranks of the Ironsides, when he brings with him a frame of adamant, a heart of steel, and a thorough knowledge of the duties of a cavalry officer. Pale, gaunt, and worn, looking ten years older than when he last saw these same troopers at Newbury,

Effingham still works with the eager, restless zeal of a man who would fain stifle remembrance and drive reflection from his mind.

The line breaks into column once more—the squadrons wheel rapidly, the rays of a winter sun flashing from their steel head-pieces and breast-plates—the horses snort and ring their bridles cheerily—the word of command flies sonorous from line to line—the General gallops to and fro, pleased with the progress of the mimic war—the drill is going on most satisfactorily, when a small escort of cavalry is seen to approach the parade-ground, and remains at a cautious distance from the manœuvres. An officer flaunting in scarf and feathers singles himself out, gallops up to the General, and salutes with his drawn sword as he makes his report. Cromwell thunders out a ‘Halt!’ that brings every charger upon his haunches. The men are permitted to dismount; the officers gather round their chief, and Harrison—for it is Harrison—who has just arrived, sits immovable upon his horse, with his sword-point lowered, waiting to learn the General’s pleasure as to the disposal of his prisoner, whose sex makes it a somewhat puzzling matter to decide.

‘They have made reprisals upon *us*,’ said Cromwell, in his deep, harsh tones, patting and making much of the good horse under him. ‘Man or woman, let the prisoner be placed in secure ward. Verily, we are more merciful than just in that we spare the weaker sex. The Malignants deal more harshly with the saints. Their blood be on their own head!’ he added, solemnly.

Harrison turned his horse's head to depart. Little cared he, that reckless soldier, how they disposed of the lady he had taken prisoner; he was thinking how he should billet the men and horses he had brought in, not of the fate of his unhappy captive.

'Stay,' said Cromwell, 'dismiss the soldiers, and bring the Malignant woman hither. I will myself question her ere she be placed in ward.'

As he spoke he dismounted, and entered a large stone building converted into a barraek, attended by a few of his officers, amongst whom was Effingham, and followed by the prisoner under escort of two stalwart troopers, who 'advanced' their musquetoons with a ludicrous disinclination thus to guard an enemy of the softer sex.

The prisoner was a fair, handsome woman in the prime of her beauty. She was dressed in a lady's riding-gear of her time, which, notwithstanding its masculine character, was powerless to diminish her feminine attractions; and looked thoroughly exhausted and worn out by physial fatigue. Yet was there a haughty turn about her head, an impatient gesture of her gloved hand, that denoted the spirit within was dauntless and indomitable as ever.

The instant that the short cloak she wore was removed, and the beaver hitherto slouched over her face taken off by Cromwell's orders, an operation which allowed a profusion of rich brown hair to fall nearly to her waist, Effingham started as if he had been shot. He would have spoken, but an imperious glance from the prisoner seemed to freeze the words

upon his lips. He held his peace, and stood there, deadly pale, and trembling like a child.

Harrison's report was soon made, and amounted to this:—

That in his duty of patrolling the open country lying nearest to Goring's outposts, and visiting his videttes, he had espied a lady mounted on a good horse, who had ridden boldly into the centre of his escort, and demanded to be conducted at once to Gloucester and brought before Cromwell—that she avowed she belonged to the Royalist party, but had abandoned their cause, and was the bearer of important papers, which were to be laid before Cromwell alone—that on his proposition that she should be searched for these papers, and a corporal's attempting to do so, she had snapped a pistol in the sub-officer's face, which providentially flashing in the pan, only singed his beard and eyebrows—that out of respect to Cromwell he had brought her on without further violence, 'though that she has not some evil intentions I never can believe,' concluded Harrison, 'for she is the very first woman I ever came across yet that could ride nearly a dozen miles and never open her lips to speak a word, good or bad.'

The General scanned his prisoner carefully. His usual tact and discernment were here at fault. 'Woman!' he said, rudely and sternly, 'what want you here—whence came you—and why venture you thus amongst the people of the Lord?'

'I would see Cromwell alone,' replied Mary Cave (for Mary Cave it was, as Effingham too surely knew), and she no longer looked exhausted and fatigued, but

the blood came back to her cheek, the haughty turn to her head and neck, the indomitable curve to her lip, as she felt the crisis had come, and her spirit mounted with the occasion. 'I have ridden far and fast to see you, General,' she added, with a certain tone of irony in her voice; 'you will not refuse to grant an interview when a lady asks it.'

Effingham felt a strange thrill to hear her voice. How it took him back to that which seemed now some other stage of existence, albeit so short a time ago. How associated she was in his mind with that *other* one. To him, though 'she was not the Rose, she had been near the Rose,' and he would willingly at that moment have given a year of his life to ask tidings of her whose name was still nestling at his heart.

Cromwell hesitated. Bold schemer, undaunted soldier as he was, he entertained a morbid dread of assassination, a dread that in later days, when in the full flush of his prosperity, and seated on the throne, caused him to wear proof-armor on all public occasions under his clothes.

He had read, too, of women who would not scruple to sacrifice their lives in a political cause; his own enterprising spirit told him how readily it was possible to encounter certain death for a great object; and this lady did not look as if she was likely to shrink from any desperate deed because of its danger. And yet to fear a woman! Psha! it seemed absurd. He would grant her the interview she desired; though, according to Harrison's report, she had been so ready with her pistol, she was now obviously disarmed; besides, he was well guarded, surrounded by

his troopers and his friends. He looked upon his officers for the most part trustworthy, fearless veterans, whose courage and fidelity he had already tried on many a well-fought field. Effingham alone was a new acquaintance, and his quick eye caught the expression of George's countenance watching the prisoner's face.

'Do you know anything of the lady?' said he, in short, imperious tones, and turning sharply round upon his new officer, with a frown of displeasure gathering on his thick brows.

'You may speak the truth, Captain Effingham!' said Mary, with a look of quiet contempt.

Thus adjured, Effingham hesitated no longer to acknowledge his acquaintance with the beautiful 'Malignant.'

'Mistress Mary Cave is too well known at the Court not to have won the respect and confidence of all who have ever breathed that polluted atmosphere. I will answer for her faith and honesty with my head. If she fail you, my life shall be for the life of her.'

Mary thanked him with a grateful glance.

'I have a boon to ask of you, General; a bargain to drive, if you will. Grant me the interview I require, and bid me go in peace.'

Cromwell signed to her to follow him into a smaller apartment, in which a fire was burning, and which contained a chair, a writing-table, and a few articles of rough comfort.

'Captain Effingham,' he said, in his short, stern tones, 'place two sentries at the door. Remain your-

self within call. Madam, I am now at your service. Speak on ; we are alone.'

He doffed his heavy head-piece, placed it on the writing-table, and was about to throw himself into the chair. The General was no polished courtier—above all, no woman-worshipper—but there was that in Mary Cave's bearing which checked his first impulse, and bade him stand up respectfully before his prisoner.

Never in all her life before had Mary such need to call up the presence of mind and resolution that formed so important a part of her character. Here she stood, a gentle, soft-nurtured lady, brought up in all the exaggerated refinement of a court, before her bitterest enemy, the most uncompromising as he was the most powerful champion of her adversaries' party. Completely in his power, dependent on his generosity for immunity from exposure, insult—nay, death itself (for, alas! the exasperated feelings aroused by the cruelties practised on both sides were not always restrained by consideration for age or sex) ; and, save for her accidental meeting with Effingham, whom she had little expected to see here, utterly friendless in the rebel camp. This was the interview that she had been looking forward to for days, that she had so prayed and hoped might be accomplished ; that, seeming tolerably easy when seen from a distance, had been the goal to which all her schemes and wishes tended ; and now that she was actually face to face with Cromwell, she shook from head to foot as she had never trembled in her life before—but once.

His manner, though reserved, became less stern than at first. Show us the man of any profession, soldier, statesman, Puritan, or archbishop, from eighteen to eighty (a fair margin), on whom beauty, real womanly beauty, makes no impression, and we will show you the eighth wonder of the world.

‘Reassure yourself, madam,’ said Cromwell, with a tone of kindness in his harsh voice; ‘I do not to-day hear the name of Mistress Mary Cave for the first time. I can safely affirm I would long ago have given much to obtain possession of the lady who thus voluntarily surrenders herself as a prisoner. I have yet to learn what brings her into the very stronghold of the enemy. Had she been a man, there had been a price on her head.’

These words were alarming; but the smile that stole over the General’s face was softer and kindlier than his wont.

Mary began her answer with a degree of composure far too obvious not to be affected.

‘I am come,’ said she, ‘to negotiate the exchange of a prisoner. A messenger might have lingered, letters been intercepted, even a white flag outraged, so, General—so—I came myself. Major Bosville is languishing; perhaps dying, in Gloucester gaol. May he not be ransomed, can he not be exchanged? Any sum of money, any number of prisoners—ay, ten for one.’

Cromwell’s brow grew dark. ‘You ask too much, madam,’ he replied, shaking his head sternly. ‘That officer lies even now under sentence of death. He has refused to give any information concerning the

strength or movements of the enemy. A confirmed Malignant, he shall die the death! Hath not Rupert slain in cold blood thirteen godly warriors taken with arms in their hands? The blood of the Lord's anointed cries aloud for vengeance! God do so to me, and more also, if I smite not root and branch, till the Amalekite is destroyed out of the land!

He was chafing now—angry and restless, like some noble beast of prey.

Mary fitted the last arrow to her bowstring. 'You know me, General,' she said, with something of her old proud air. 'You know my power, my influence, my information. Listen; I will buy Bosville's life of you. You shall make your own terms.'

Cromwell smiled. Perhaps he had his private opinion of these lady politicians, these fair intriguers with the Queen at their head, who hampered the counsels of their friends far more effectually than they anticipated the designs of their enemies. He was perfectly courteous, but somewhat ironical in his reply.

'You cannot bribe me, madam,' said he, 'valuable as I doubt not is the price you offer. Your information may or may not be far superior to my own—your talent for intrigue doubtless many degrees finer. I am a simple soldier; my duty lies plain before me. I will have blood for blood, and I have the warrant of Scripture for my determination.'

Poor Mary! she broke down altogether now. The bold warrior-spirit, the craft of statesmanship, the artificial pride of rank and station, all gave way be-

fore the overwhelming flood of womanly pity and womanly fear. She seized the General's rough coarse hand in both her own, so white and soft by the contrast. Ere he could prevent her she pressed it to her lips: she bent over it, and clung to it, and folded it to her bosom. Down on her knees she implored him, she besought him, she *prayed* to him, with tears and sobs, to spare the prisoner's life. Her pride was fallen altogether now, her humiliation complete. It was no longer the stately Mary Cave, the Queen's minion, the adviser of statesmen, the ornament of a Court, but a broken-hearted woman pleading for life and death.

'Save him, General,' she gasped, gazing wildly up in his face; 'save him, for mercy's sake, as you hope to be saved yourself at the last day! What is it to you a life the more or less? What is your authority worth if you can hesitate to exercise it for so trifling a matter? Is Cromwell so completely under the orders of Fairfax, so subservient to Ireton, such a sworn slave of the Parliament, that in his own camp he cannot extend mercy to whom he will?

Her woman's instinct told her through all her distress and all her confusion where lay the weak point in the fortress she assailed; bid her attack him through his pride, his self-respect, his jealousy of command; and dimmed as were her eyes with tears, she saw she had shot her arrow home.

Cromwell flushed a deeper red up to his very temples, the scowl upon his bent brows, and the conspicuous wart over his right eye, lending an ominous and sinister expression to his whole countenance. He

spoke not, but the hand she grasped was rudely withdrawn, and the high-born, gently nurtured lady was fain to clasp him round the knees, cased in those wide, solid riding-boots, with their heavy spurs, that rang and jingled as he stamped twice in his passion against the floor.

‘Save him, General!’ she repeated. ‘Is there no consideration you will listen to, no appeal you will respect? Hear me; I sent him on his errand. I got him his appointment. I bade him go forth wounded and helpless into the very jaws of your troopers, and now if he is to die his blood is on *my* head. Oh! think of your own mother! think of your own child! think of any one that you have ever loved! Would you see her kneeling as I do now? would you see her, lonely, helpless amongst strangers and enemies, pleading for dear life, and bear to know that she was refused? Think better of it, for the love of mercy, General, think better of it. Grant me this one boon, and I will pray for you, enemy though you be, night and morning, on my bended knees, till my dying day.’

His voice sounded hoarser than usual, and he loosened the plain linen band around his throat as he muttered the word—‘Reprisals!’

She sprang fiercely from her knees, flung his hand, which she had again taken, away from her in scorn, and flashed at him such a glance as made even Cromwell quail.

‘Reprisals!’ she repeated. ‘It is the Puritan’s English for murder. You have refused me—refused Mary Cave on her bended knees, who never knelt be-

fore to mortal man—beware of my revenge! Oh! I meant it not—forgive me!’ she added, her whole manner changing once more to one of the softest, the most imploring entreaty, as the impotence and impolicy of her anger struck chill and sickening to her heart; ‘forgive my hasty words, my pride that has never yet learnt to stoop. You talk of reprisals, General; one life is worth another—take mine instead of his. Lead me out now—this minute—I am ready, and let *him* go free.’

She had touched the keystone now; the sympathy for courage and devotion which every brave man feels. He turned his face away that she might not see his emotion, for there were tears in Cromwell’s eyes. She took the gesture for one of refusal, and it was in sad, plaintive tones she proffered her last despairing request.

‘At least grant me the one last boon I have ridden so far to ask. It is not a little thing that will tempt a woman to the step I have taken. You cannot refuse me this—if I cannot save him, at least I can die with him. Shot, steel, or hempen noose, whatever penalty is exacted from Humphrey Bosville shall be shared by her who sent him here to die. I ask you no more favours—I claim it as a right—he shall not suffer for my sake alone. Do not think I shall flinch at the last moment. See! there is not a trooper of all your Ironsides that fears death less than Mary Cave!’

She had conquered triumphantly at last. The brave spirit could not but recognise its kindred nature. He had made up his mind now, and not a hair of Humphrey’s head should have fallen had the whole

Parliament of England voted his death to a man. Kindly, courteously, nay, almost tenderly, the rough Puritan soldier raised the kneeling lady to her feet. With a consideration she little expected, he placed her carefully in the chair, sent an orderly trooper for food and wine, and even bestirred himself to ascertain where she might be most safely lodged till her departure with a safe-conduct under his own hand.

‘I grant your request, Mistress Mary Cave, and I attach to my concession but two conditions. The one, it is needless to state, is that Major Bosville passes his *parole* never again to bear arms against the Parliament, and the other’—his glance softened more and more as he proceeded—‘that you will not quite forget plain Oliver Cromwell, and that hereafter when you hear his harshness censured, and his rustic breeding derided, you will not be ashamed to say you have known him to show the courtesy of a gentleman and the feeling of a man!’

With an obeisance, the respectful deference of which could not have been outdone by any plumed hat that ever swept the floors of Whitehall, Cromwell took his leave of his fair suppliant, consigning her to the care of George Effingham for the present, and promising her a written pardon in his own hand, and safe conduct through his outposts for herself and Humphrey Bosville, by the morrow’s dawn.

Her spirit had kept her up hitherto, but fatigue, watching, and anxiety were too much for her woman’s strength; and as Cromwell’s massive figure disappeared through the doorway, she laid her head upon the coarse deal table and gave way to a passion of tears.

CHAPTER XXI.

‘UNDER SENTENCE.’

CONDEMNED to die! Reader, have you ever realized to yourself all that is contained in those three words? Have you ever considered how large a share of your daily life is comprised in what we may term the immediate future, in the cares, so to speak, of ‘what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and wherewithal you shall be clothed?’ Have you ever reflected how your own petty schemes and intrigues—equally petty when viewed at the supreme moment, whether you be a politician on the cross benches, or a grocer behind your counter—fill up the measure of your hopes and wishes? how your own financial budget, whether it affect the revenues of a kingdom or the contents of a till, is the subject that occupies most of your thoughts? and how, when sagacity and foresight upon such matters become superfluous, there is a blank in your whole being, which you feel, perhaps for the first time, ought to have been filled up long ago with something that would not have deserted you at your need, that would have accompanied you into that *terra incognita* which the most material of us feel at some moments is really our home?

And yet at the crisis, it seems as though the spirit-wings were weaker than ever, and instead of

soaring aloft into the blue heaven, can but flap heavily and wearily along the surface of earth, as though the mind were incapable of projecting itself into the future, and must needs dwell mistily and inconclusively on the Past; and there is no proverb truer than that 'the ruling passion is strong in death,' as all will readily admit whose lot it has ever been to look the King of Terrors in the face.

Humphrey Bosville lay condemned to death in Gloucester gaol. His examination, after a short imprisonment, had been conducted by Cromwell himself, with the few rude formalities extended to the trial of a prisoner-of-war. He had been questioned as to the strength of the King's army, and the deliberation of his councillors; like a soldier and a man of honour, he had steadfastly declined to divulge even the little he knew. The court that tried him was composed simply enough, consisting, besides Cromwell, of Harrison and another. The former of these two vainly endeavoured to persuade his prisoner, for whom he had taken a great liking, to turn traitor, and save his own life. Humphrey, however, was immovable, and Harrison liked him all the better. The proceedings were short, and not at all complicated. 'You refuse, then, to answer the questions put to you by the court?' said Cromwell, folding a sheet of paper in his hands with an ominous frown.

'I do, distinctly,' replied the prisoner, regardless of a meaning look from Harrison, and a strenuous nudge from that stout soldier's elbow.

'Sentence of death recorded. His blood be on his own head!' commented Cromwell; adding, with a

look that lent a fearful interest to the simple words, 'to-morrow morning, at gun-fire.'

'God and the King!' exclaimed Humphrey, in a loud, fearless voice, placing his plumed hat jauntily on his head, and marching off between his gaolers, humming cheerfully the Royalist air of 'Cuckolds, come, dig!'

So the court broke up. Cromwell went to drill his Ironsides; Harrison to visit his outposts, with what result we have already learned; and another Cavalier was to die.

They placed food and wine in his cell; the grim troopers who guarded him looked on him no longer as an enemy. Already he was invested with the fearful interest of the departing traveller; he who ere twenty-four hours have elapsed will be in that land of which all of us have thought, and which none of us have seen. They were soldiers, too, and they liked his *pluck*, his gallant bearing, his cheerful good humour, his considerate courtesy even to his escort; for Humphrey was a gentleman at heart, and one essential peculiarity of the breed is, that it never shows its purity so much as when *in extremis*. Not a rough dragoon in the guard-room, including Ebenezer the Gideonite, who was still black and blue from shoulder to hip, but would have shared his ration willingly, 'Malignant' though he was, with the Cavalier officer.

He ate his portion of food with a good appetite, and drank off his wine to the King's health. The winter sun streamed in at the grating of his cell, the heavy tramp of the sentry at his door rung through

the silence of the long stone corridor. It was all over now. It was come at last, and Humphrey sat him down to think.

Yes, he had looked upon Death as a near neighbour for years ; he had fronted him pretty often in Flanders before this unhappy civil war, and had improved his acquaintance with him since at Edge-Hill, Roundway-Down, Newbury, and elsewhere ; nay, he had felt the grasp of his icy hand but very lately, when he failed to parry that delicate thrust of Goring's. What an awkward thrust it was ! and should he not have met it in carte, rather than tierce, and so gone round his adversary's blade ? Pshaw ! how his mind wandered. And what was the use of thinking of such matters now ?—now that he had not twenty-four hours to live—now that he should fix his thoughts on the next world, and pray ardently for the welfare of his soul. Ay, 'twas well that he had not neglected this duty, and put it off till to-day ; do what he would, he could not control his mind, and bid it obey his will. Thoughts after thoughts came surging in, like ocean-waves, and bore him on and swamped him, so to speak, in their resistless tide. Might he but have chosen, he would not have died quite like this. No ! he had hoped to go down in some victorious onset, stirrup to stirrup with hot Prince Rupert, the best blood in England, charging madly behind him to the old war-cry that made his blood boil even now—the stirring battle-word of ' God and the King !'—sword in hand, and the sorrel pulling hard !—the poor sorrel. Harrison had promised his prisoner to take care of the good horse ;

there was some comfort in that, and Harrison was a soldier, though a Roundhead. Ay, that had been a glorious death; or, better still, to have dragged his wounded frame to Mary's feet and laid his head upon her knee, and died there *so* peaceful, *so* happy, like a child hushing off to its sleep. Mary would think of him—mourn him, surely—and never forget him now. How would she look when they told her of it in the Queen's chamber? He tried to fancy her, pale and wobegone, bending to hide her face over the embroidery he knew so well—the embroidery he had told her playfully was to be finished ere he came back again. He would never come back to her now; and the large tears that his own fate had failed to draw from him, gathered in his eyes as he thought of that glorious lady's desolation, and fell unheeded on his clasped hands. Well, he had promised her, if need were, to give his life ungrudgingly for the Cause—and he had redeemed his word. Perhaps in another world he might meet her again, and be proud to show her the stainless purity of his shield. He thought over his past life—he was no casuist, no theologian; his simple faith, like that of his knightly ancestors, was comprised in a few words—'*Für Gott und für ihr,*' might have been engraved on his blade, as it was emblazoned on the banner of the chivalrous Lord Craven—he whose romantic attachment to the Queen of Bohemia was never outdone in the imagination of a Troubadour, who worshipped his royal ladye-love as purely and unselfishly as he risked life and fortune ungrudgingly in her cause. So was it with Humphrey—'*For God and for her*' was the sentiment that

had ruled his every action of late—that consoled him and bore him up now, when he was about to die. It was not wisdom, it was not philosophy, it was not perhaps true religion; but it served him well enough—it stood him in the stead of all these—it carried him forward into the spirit life where, it may be, that some things we wot not of in our worldly forethought, are the true reality, and others that we have worshipped here faithfully and to our own benefit—such as prudential considerations, external respectability, and ‘good common sense’—are found to be the myths and the delusions, the bubbles that the cold air of Death has dispelled for evermore.

At least, Humphrey knew he had but another night to live; and when he had prayed, hopefully and resignedly, with but one small grain of discontent, one faint repining that he might not see her just *once* again, he drew his pallet from the corner of his cell, and with folded arms and calm placid brow laid him down peacefully to sleep.

So sound were his slumbers, that they were not disturbed by the armed tread of the captain of the ward, a fierce old Puritan, who ushered up the corridor the cloaked and hooded figure of a woman, accompanied by an officer of the Ironsides, who had shown him an order, signed by Cromwell’s own hand, which he dared not disobey. The grim warder, however, influenced by the prisoner’s gallant and gentle demeanour, would fain have dissuaded the visitors from disturbing his repose.

‘If you be friends of the Major’s,’ said he, in the gruff tones peculiar to all such custodians, ‘you would

act more kindly to let him be; they mostly gets their little snooze about this time of night; and if he's not roused, he'll sleep right on till to-morrow morning; and the nearer he wakes to gun-fire, the better for him. You'll excuse my making so free, madam; the Major's got to be shot at daybreak. But if you're come to examine of him, or to get anything more out of him than what he told the Court, I tell ye it's no use, and a burning shame into the bargain. I can't keep ye out, seeing it's the General's order—and Cromwell's a man who *will* be obeyed; but I can't bear to see the Major put upon neither, and he such a nice well-spoken gentleman, and the last night as he's to be with us and all.' So grumbling, the old gaoler, who was not without a sort of rough coarse kindness of his own, opened the cell door, and admitting the visitors, set his lamp down on the floor for their service; after which civility he returned to cough and grumble by himself in the passage.

Mary looked on the face of the sleeper, and for the first time since she had known him realized the unassuming courage of that honest heart. Could this be the man who, ere twelve hours should elapse, was doomed to die? this calm and placid sleeper, breathing so heavily and regularly, with a smile on his lips, and his fair brow smooth and unruffled as a child's. She turned proudly to Effingham. 'Is he not worthy of the Cause?' was all she said; and Effingham, looking there upon his comrade and his rival, wiped the dew from his forehead, for the conflict of his feelings was more than he could bear.

Mary bent over him till her long hair swept across his face.

‘Humphrey,’ she whispered, in the sweetest of her soft caressing tones, ‘Humphrey, wake up; do you not know me?—wake up.’

The sleeper stirred and turned. The well-known voice must have called up some association of ideas in his mind; perhaps he was dreaming of her even then and there. He muttered something. In the deep silence of the cell both his listeners caught it at once. Mary blushed crimson for very shame; and Effingham felt his heart leap as it had never leapt before.

The sleeper had but whispered three words—‘Mary, Loyalty, Mary,’ was all he said; and then he woke, and stared wildly upon his visitors.

In another instant he had seized Mary’s hand, and was folding it to his heart in a transport of affection and delight. He knew not that his life had been spared—he still thought he was to die; but he believed his prayers had been answered—that, whether in the body or out of the body, he was permitted to look on her once again—and that was enough for him.

Effingham did as he would be done by, and left the cell. If ‘he jests at scars who never felt a wound,’ on the other hand he is wondrously quick-witted and sympathizing who has himself gone through the *peine forte et dure* of real affection.

And Effingham, too, felt a weight taken off his heart. He could rejoice now without a single drawback at his comrade’s pardon. To do him justice, he would have given all he had in the world to save him

yesterday; but now he felt that though henceforth they would never again fight side by side, Bosville was his friend and brother once more. He felt, too, that there was something to live for still, that Hope was not dead within him, and his arm would henceforth be nerved for the struggle by a nobler motive than despair. His future existed once more. Yesterday his life was a blank; to-day, simply because a sleeping captive had muttered a proper name, that blank was filled again with colours bright and rosy as the tints of the morning sky. Such are the ups and downs of poor mortality; such is the weakness of what we are pleased to term the godlike mind that rules our mass of clay.

We will follow Effingham's example; we will not rob Humphrey of his *tête-à-tête* with his mistress, nor intrude upon his transports when he learned that the hand he loved so dearly was the one that had saved him from death. It was too delightful—it was almost maddening to reflect on all she had undergone for his sake: how she had pleaded with Cromwell for his pardon, and having obtained it, had taken possession of him, as it were, at once, and passed her word for his *parole* as if he belonged to her, body and soul; and so he *did* belong to her, and so he would. Oh! if she would but accept his devotion! he longed to pour out his very heart's blood at her feet. Poor Humphrey! he was young, you see, and of a bold, honest nature, so he knew no better.

The three left the prison together, with a cordial farewell from the kind old governor, and walked through the dark night to the hostelry in the town.

Mary was very silent. Did she regret what she had done? did she grudge her efforts for the prisoner? Far from it! She was thinking of all he deserved at her hands, of how she never could repay him for all his fondness and devotion, of the debtor and creditor account between them, and how she wished he could be a little, ever so little, less infatuated about her.

Again we say, poor Humphrey!

CHAPTER XXII.

'FATHER AND CHILD.'

GRACE ALLONBY is very sad and lonely now. Anxiety and distress have told upon her health and spirits, and the girl, once so fresh and elastic, goes about her household duties with a pale cheek and a listless step that worry her father to his heart's core. Sir Giles has but little time for speculation on private affairs, his duty to his sovereign keeps him constantly employed, and it requires no astute politician to discover that, whatever apprehensions he may have to spare, are due to that sovereign's critical position. The Royal Parliament has been convened at Oxford, and has voted anything and everything except *supplies*. Its sister assemblage at Westminster, bitter in successful rivalry, has refused to treat for peace; Hopton has sustained a conclusive defeat from Waller at Alresford. Oxford is no longer a secure haven, and the King, deprived of the society and counsels of his wife, feels himself more than usually perplexed and disheartened. Sir Giles has enough to do with his own regimental duties, for, come what may, he never neglects for an instant that task of organization and discipline on which the old soldier feels that life and honour must depend. His advice, too, is constantly required, and as constantly neglected

by the King; but bitter and unpalatable as it may be, it is always proffered with the same frank honesty and singleness of purpose. He has succeeded in raising and arming no contemptible force of cavalry. With his own stout heart at their head, he thinks they can ride through and through a stand of pikes with a dash that shall win Prince Rupert's grim approval on a stricken field. He cannot foresee that, ere long, they will prove the speed of their horses, rather than the temper of their blades, on the wide expanse of fatal Marston-Moor. In the mean time they are equipped and ready to march.

An escort is provided to guard 'Gracey' back to her kinswoman's house at Boughton, where she will remain in bodily safety, no doubt, and will fulfil her destiny as a woman, by wasting her own heart in anxiety for the fate of others. Oxford will be emptied soon of all but its loyal professors and stanch war-worn garrison. Grace does not seem to regret her departure, nor to look forward to her journey with any anticipations of delight, nor to care much whether she goes or stays. Her father's return to active service seems to alarm and depress her, and she wanders about the house with her eyes full of tears, but he has often left her to go campaigning before, and never seen her 'take on,' as he expresses it, like this. What can have come over the girl?

'If she had but a mother now,' thinks Sir Giles, with a half bitter pang to feel that his own honest affection should be insufficient for his daughter. He could almost reproach himself that he has not married a second time; but no, Gracey! not even for you

could he consent to sacrifice that dream of the past, which is all the old man has left to him on earth. Why do we persist in cherishing the *little* we have, so much the more the *less* it is? Why is the widow's mite, being her all, so much *more* than the rich man's stores of silver and gold, being *his all* too? Perhaps it is that we must suffer before we can enjoy, must pine in poverty before we can revel in possession; and therefore Lazarus devours his crust with famished eagerness, whilst Dives pushes his plate disdainfully away, and curses fretfully cook and butler, who cannot make him hungry or thirsty, albeit his viands are served on silver, and his wine bubbles in a cup of gold. Sir Giles loves a memory fifteen years old better than all the rest of the world, and Gracey into the bargain.

He sits after supper with a huge goblet of claret untasted at his elbow. Leaning his head on his hand he watches his daughter unobserved. All day she has been busied about little matters for his comfort. He marches to-morrow at dawn, and she too leaves Oxford for Northamptonshire. She was more cheerful, he thinks, this afternoon, and the interest and bustle had brought a colour again to her cheek; but how pale and tired she looks now, bending over that strip of work. The delicate fingers, too, though they fly nimbly as ever in and out, are thinner than they used to be—and she always turns her face away from the lamp. A father's eyes, Grace, are sharper than you think for; he is watching you narrowly from under his shaded brows, and he sees the tears raining down thick upon your work and your wasted hands. In the whole of her married life your mother never wept like that.

He can stand it no longer.

‘Gracey,’ says he, in his deep, kind tones; ‘Gracey! little woman! what’s the matter?’

He took her on his knee, as he used to do when she was a little curly-headed thing, and she hid her face on his shoulder, her long dark hair mingling with the old man’s white locks and beard.

She clung to him and sobbed wearily, and told him, ‘it was nothing—she was tired, and anxious, and nervous, but well—quite well—and, it was nothing.’

He had long lost his place in his daughter’s heart, though he knew it not.

He strove to cheer her up gently and warily, with a womanly tact and tenderness you could hardly have expected from the war-worn soldier, leading her insensibly from domestic details to the hopes and proceedings of the Royalists, and she struggled to be calm, and appeared to lend an anxious ear to all his details.

‘We shall have a large army in the north, Grace,’ said the old Cavalier; ‘and when Prince Rupert has relieved York—and relieve it he will, my lass, for hot as he is, there is not a better officer in the three kingdoms, when his hands are loose—he will effect a junction with the King, and we shall then be able to show the Roundheads a front that will keep their ragged Parliament in check once more. What, girl! we have still Langdale and Lisle, and the Shrewsbury Foot, and gallant Northampton with all his merry-men at his back, not to mention my own knaves, whose rear-guard you saw march out this morning.

I have taken some trouble with them, you know, and they're the best brigade I've commanded yet by a good deal. Why, what said young Bosville when he lay in this very room?—ay, on the sofa where you always sit at your stitching—and saw them file past the windows before they were half-drilled. "Sir Giles," said he, "they're the only cavalry we have that can *ride*." And there's no better judge and no better soldier for a young man than Humphrey, whom I love as my own son. They'll win your old father his peerage yet before I've done with 'em. Fill me out the claret, my darling, and we'll drink a health to Lady Grace!

She did as she was desired, and he could not have accused her of paleness now. Was it the anticipation of her exalted rank that thus brought the blood in a rush to Grace's cheeks?

'Ay! if worst comes to worst,' proceeded the old knight, after a hearty pull at the claret, 'the rebels will be glad to come to terms. I am an old man now, sweetheart, and I want to live at peace with my neighbours. When I've had these new levies in a good rousing fire once and again, and seen the knaves hold their own with Cromwell and his men in iron, I shall be satisfied for my part. Besides, we fight unincumbered now; the Queen's safe enough down in the West. I heard from Mary this morning by Jermyn, who travelled here post with despatches; and the Queen——'

'From Mary!' interrupted Grace, her eyes sparkling and her face flushing once more; 'what says she? Does she talk about herself?—does she give you any news?'

She spoke in a sharp quick tone; and the slender fingers that rested on her father's glass clasped it tight round the stem.

'She writes mostly of the Cause, as is her wont,' replied Sir Giles, not noticing his daughter's eagerness. 'They have hopes of more men and horses down in the West. Ay, there is talk too of foreign assistance; but for my part I put little faith in that. The Queen's household is much diminished,—that's a good job at least. I read my Bible, Grace, I hope, like a good Christian, and I believe every word in it, but I have never yet *seen* that "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Howsoever, there is but little pomp now in the Queen's court at Exeter. Mary only mentions herself and Mrs. Kirke, and Lady Carlisle, whom I never could abide; and Dormer and Bosville as gentlemen of the chamber; and that is all.'

Grace's breath came quick and short. She was still on her father's knee, but in such a posture that he could not see her face. She would have given much to be able to ask one simple question, but she dared not—no, she *dared* not. She held her peace, feeling as if she was stifled.

'The Queen were best on the Continent,' pursued Sir Giles, 'and Mary seems to think she will go ere long, taking her household with her. God be with them. England is well rid of the half of them.'

Grace laughed—such a faint, forced, miserable laugh. Poor Grace! the blow had been long coming, and it had fallen at last. Of course he would accompany his Royal mistress abroad; of course, she would

never, never see him again; of course he was nothing to her, and amidst all his duties and occupations she could have no place in his thoughts. The pertinacity with which she dwelt upon this consolatory reflection was sufficiently edifying; and of course she ought to have foreseen it all long ago, and it was far better that she should know the worst, and accustom herself to it at once. Oh, far better! A positive relief! And the poor face that she put up to kiss her father when he wished her 'Good-night,' looked whiter and more drawn than ever; the footfall that he listened to so wistfully going up the stairs dwelt wearily and heavily at every step. Sir Giles shook his head, finished his claret at a draught, and betook himself too to his couch; but the old Cavalier was restless and uneasy, his sleep little less unbroken than his daughter's.

Alas, Gracey!—she was his own child no more. He remembered her so well in her white frock, tottering across the room with her merry laugh, and holding his finger tight in the clasp of that warm little hand; he remembered her a slender slip of girlhood, galloping on her pony with a certain graceful timidity peculiarly her own, her long dark ringlets floating in the breeze, her bright eyes sparkling with the exercise, and always, frightened or confident, trusting and appealing to 'Father' alone. He remembered her, scores and scores of times, sitting on his knee as she had done this evening, nestling her head upon his shoulder, and vowing in her pretty positive way—positive always and only with *him*—that she would never marry and leave him,

never trust her old father to any hands but her own; she was sure he couldn't do without her, and if *he* wasn't sure he ought to be!

And now somebody had come and taken away all this affection from him that he considered his by right; and she was no longer his child—his very own—and never would be again. Sir Giles could not have put his thoughts explicitly into words, but he had a dim consciousness of the fact, and it saddened while it almost angered him. Though he slept but little he was up and astir long before daybreak; and the 'God bless thee, Gracey!' which was always his last word at parting with his daughter, was delivered more hoarsely and solemnly than his wont. The pale face with its red eyelids haunted him as he rode; and except once to give a beggar an alms, and once to swear testily at his best horse for a stumble, Sir Giles never uttered a syllable for the first ten miles of his journey.

And Grace, too, in the train of her kinsman, Lord Vaux, travelled wearily back to his house at Boughton, which she considered her home. Faith, riding alongside of her, to cheer her mistress's spirits, forgot her own griefs—for Faith too had lost a lover—in sympathy for the lady's meek uncomplaining sadness.

'It's all along of the Captain!' thought Faith, whose own affairs had not dimmed the natural sharpness of her sight; 'it's all along of the Captain, and he ought to be ashamed of himself, so he ought!'

Faith, like the rest of her class, was not particular as to the amount of blame she laid upon the absent;

and with the happy impartiality of her sex, invariably considered and proclaimed *the man* to be in the wrong. In this instance she condemned Humphrey without the slightest hesitation. It was clear he had left her young mistress without distinctly promising marriage, and when she contrasted such lukewarm negligence with the ardent passages of leave-taking that had been reciprocated by Dymocke and herself, she could scarcely contain her indignation. 'If Hugh had used *me* so,' thought Faith, and the colour rose to her cheeks as she dwelt on the possible injustice, 'as sure as I've two hands I'd have scratched his eyes out!'

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